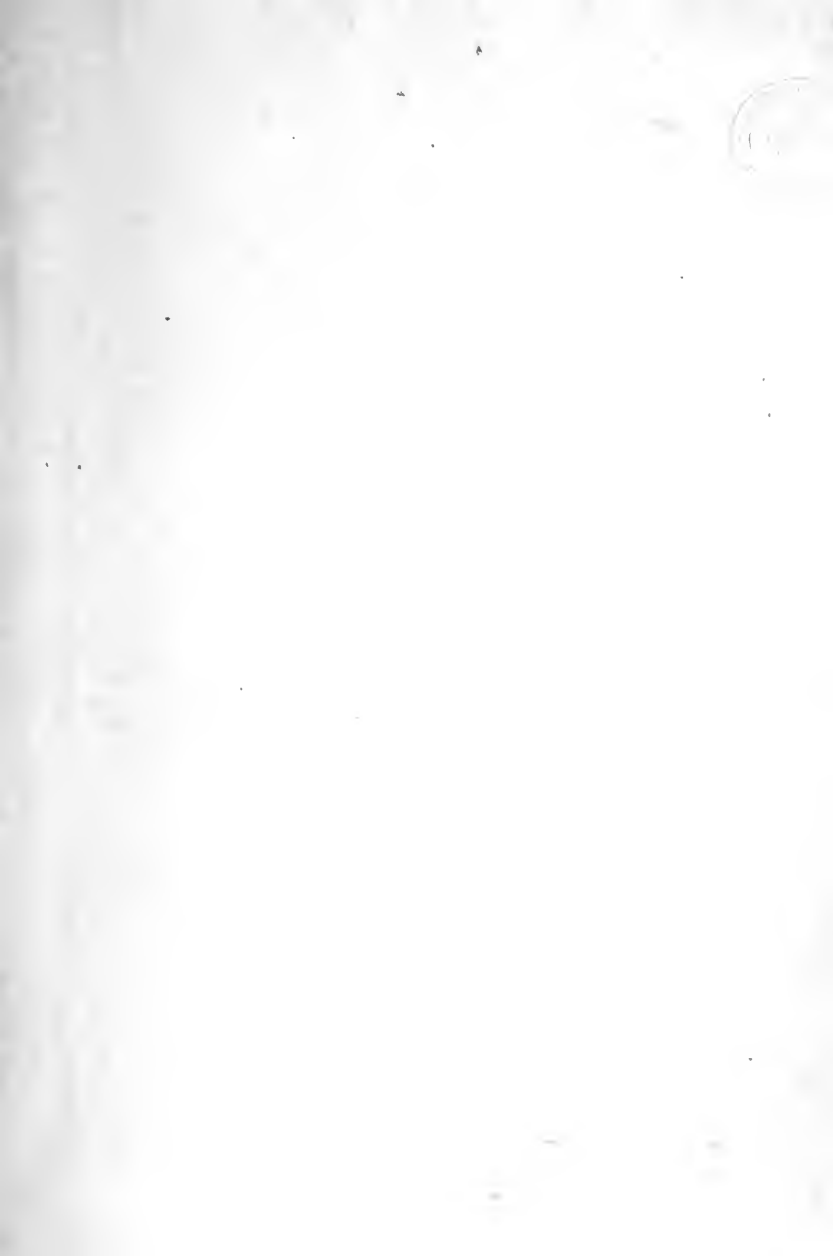






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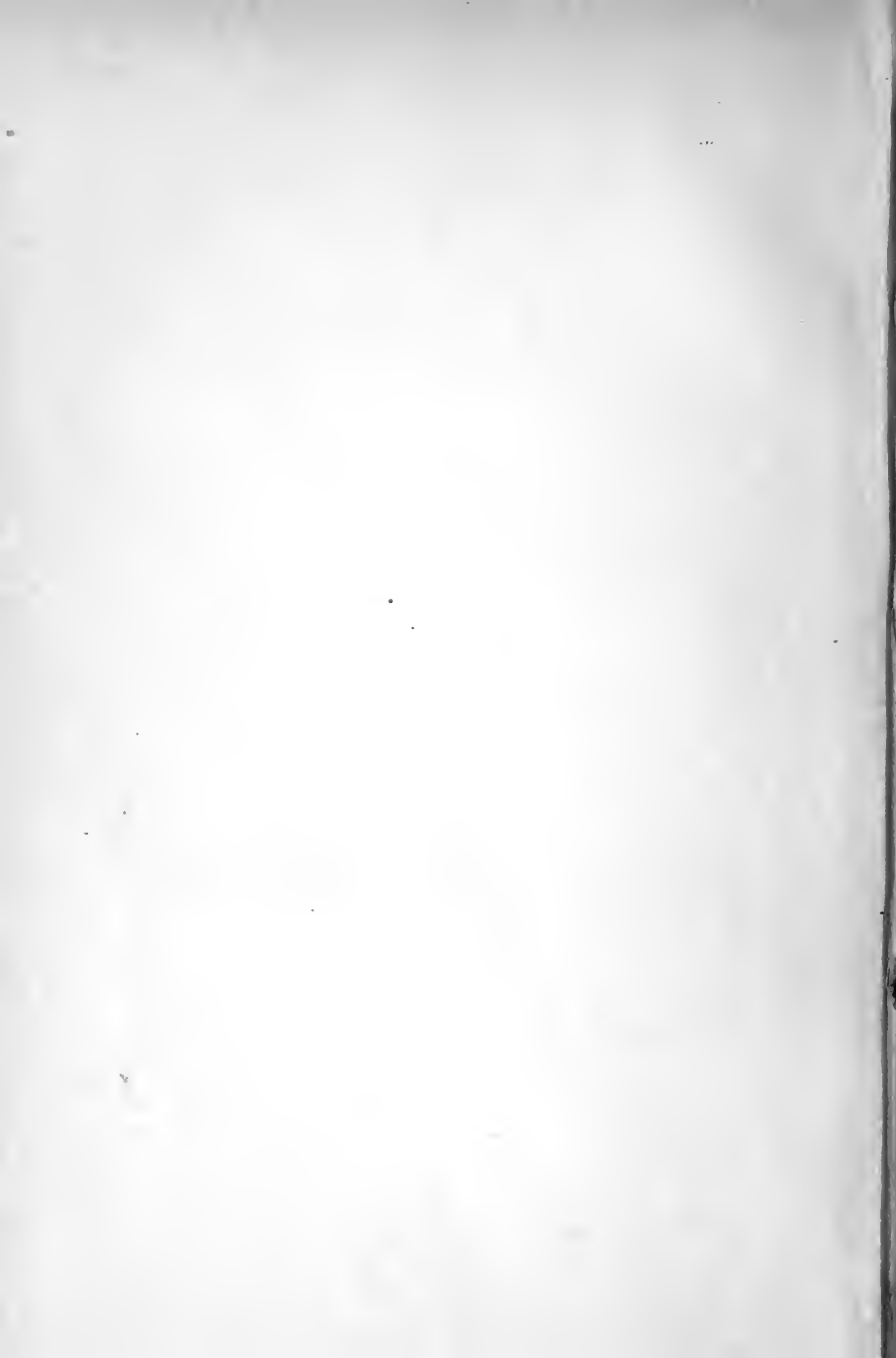


J.R. + M.W.
1857.

Chavenage,

A TALE ON THE COTSWOLDS.

1648.



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CHAYENAGE.

CHAVENAGE.

A Tale on the Cotswolds,

MDCXLVIII.

BY R. W. HUNTLEY, M.A.

LATE FELLOW OF ALL SOULS' COLLEGE.

Mamillus.—A sad tale's best for winter
I have one of sprites and goblins.

Hermione.—Let's have that, good Sir.
Come on, sit down, and do your best."

The Winter's Tale.

London :

JAMES BURNS, 17, PORTMAN STREET,
PORTMAN SQUARE.

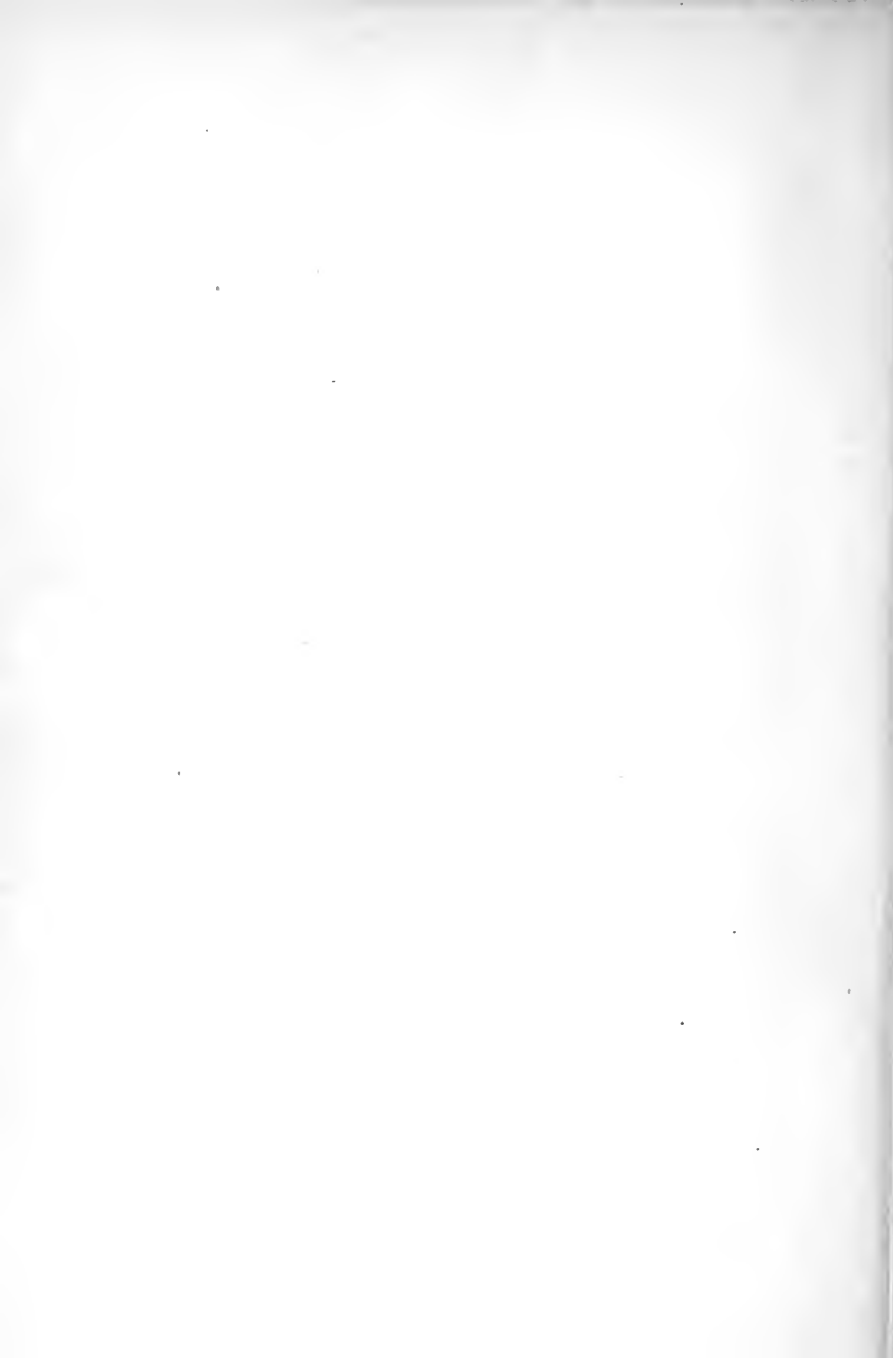
1845.

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TO THE
WARDEN AND FELLOWS OF ALL SOULS' COLLEGE,
THIS BOOK
IS DEDICATED
IN GRATEFUL RECOLLECTION OF THE ADVANTAGES
DERIVED BY THE AUTHOR
FROM A RESIDENCE OF MANY YEARS IN THEIR
ENLIGHTENED SOCIETY.



P R E F A C E.

THE Cotswolds are an elevated region descending from Warwickshire, through part of Worcestershire and Gloucestershire, in a south-western direction, and terminating at Bath.

Though the woollen manufacture has long maintained a fluctuating position in a few of the vallies of this district, still commerce has not materially invaded it ; and, as is common in such cases, the land has, in numerous instances, been long held by the same families.

From this circumstance it arises that there are various traditionary stories attached to different

localities and Manor-houses seated among the Cotswold Hills.

The present small volume purposes to rescue, from entire oblivion, one of these traditions not altogether unconnected with the general history of the kingdom : to which are added two others, of minor character, in the shape of Ballads.

The period comprised in the three tales extends from the time of King Charles I. to the reign of King George I. ; and the author has attempted to show in each, something of the religious and political feelings of the times to which they refer.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Great Rebellion, as is probably the case in all popular insurrections, gained a strength, in its outset, from the adherence of many persons of material consideration on account of family descent and patrimony, who never intended to advance to the miserable results which ultimately sprung from their success. These were persons who little foresaw that their armed opposition to the harsh and ill-advised measures of the Crown, was to connect them, at last, more or less, with the murder of their King ; and who still less conceived that the bold, and, in many cases, the generous English feeling, which induced them to incur the personal hazards of war, and, in case of failure, the punishment of treason, was, by its very victories, to bind the nation "in chains of iron" far more galling,

heavy, and unjust, than had ever been contemplated by the Monarch they destroyed. Among this class stood Nathaniel Stephens, knight of the shire for the county of Gloucester.—A man opposed not so much to the office of king, as to the royal exactions,—a friend to the Church, but dreading, in the revived ceremonies of Archbishop Laud, a return to the papal dominion in these kingdoms,—he had been induced to appear in arms, at the head of a regiment of horse, in behalf of the Parliament.

A speech, which he has left behind him, throws considerable light on his character. It appears to have for its object a general pacification of the kingdom, to be effected by coming to some arrangements which might prove acceptable to the King and the cavalier party, and might, at the same time, satisfy the desire of the people for peace, and meet also their natural expectations that their rights would be ascertained and secured to them by law. In his short oration he gives his hearers the evidences of an honest and kind heart: the quotation from the Prayer Book, which he uses as an authority, shows that that book was well known to him, and that its sentiments were held by him as valid

arguments; and in the conclusion, where he mentions the decapitation of the King as a thing hinted at, he repudiates the idea as “a strange cuer,” and was clearly, at that period, by no means prepared to consent to the measure; nor would it appear, though his family was at that time connected by marriage with Ireton and Cromwell, that they could venture to admit him to their more secret councils and darker machinations. In common with many persons of that day, who were really well read, and of more than respectable strength of mind, he by no means rejected the opinion that the spirits of the departed were permitted to admonish those still in the flesh, and to advise and direct them in any pending measure of importance. His speech, taken from the original MS. now in the hands of Mr. Townsend Stephens, and given according to his own notions of orthography, is as follows:—

“The Speache I made, wheather we should make any farther application to his Majestie, as neare as I can remember it, this 3 Maii 1648.

“Mr. Speaker,

“I assuer myselfe we se, and lament the miserable languashinge and diinge condition of poore

England. The Parliament hath bine and ought to be the Phisitions to cuer the distempers of the State ; but hitherto God hathe made us to be Phisitions of no value, for we have not healed the wounds of the daughters of his Peopell. You have now before you a sick Patient, and a desperate cuer, for the heade dothe ake extremely, and the harte is extreme sick and faintinge ; the Radicall moistuer is spent, (the Treasuer is exhausted ;) naturall heate is abated, for you have lost the hartes and affections of the peopell, and in truth the whole course of natuer is out of Frame ; so that if you doe not speedily applie some effectuall remidy, the Patient will die under our hands, to our eternal oblique. I professe I have no skill in state cuers, yet I shall be willing amongst the rest to cast in my mite. There is one Elixor, if carefully applied, may, by the Blessinge of God, be able to preserve this Church and kingdome from Ruine ; that is, an other application to his Majestie, by a personall treaty, uppon the Propositions sent to Hampton Courte and agreed on by our Brethren the Scots. I know it will be objected that we have made seven applications to him all ready to no purpose ; it is true, and I am sorry we have no better successe ; yet I pray remember that we never have made

any application to his Majestie by way of personall treaty. Besides God tells us that we should sow our seede in the morninge, and not withe-hould our hande in the eveninge, for we know not whiche shall prosper, either this or that; nether can we say but that God may give a blessinge to the 8th, although he hathe not to the 7 formerly sent, for the hartes of Kings is in his hands, and he can turne it as he pleasethe. Then it will be objected, that it is contrary to our former Voates, and we shall loose the good party by it, for we are growne so uncertaine they know not wheare to have us, or how to truste us. Our Voates are not like the Lawes of the Meads and Pertains, but they have and may be altered. But let us not deseave ourselves: there is no one thing that ever the Parlament did that hathe lost the hartes of the Peopell, as those voates did; for the Peopell did hope, that by the wisdom of the Parlament all differences would have bine reconsiled and peace settled; but uppon the voates they saw that that was impossible to be done, wheareby it appeared, that the Parlament must of necessity keep up a greate Armeie to maintaine themselves and their Party, whiche must of necessity bringe a vast charge uppon the kingdome, whiche must come out of their Purses; and he that will meddell

withe the Peopell's purses, shall be suer to loose their hartes and get their curses. Some speake of a strange cuer; they would cutt of the heade, to save the body: but as that is impossible in the naturall body, so it is unlikely in the Politicke body. For the Peopell of England are like to the Jewes in the dayes of Samuell: they would have a kinge although God and Samuel weare angrie for it, and God testified his anger by a mirracle in sending extremity of Raine and Thunder at an unseasonable time: nay, although God tould them, that insteade of a kinge to protecte them, they should have a Tyrant to destroy them, yet they would have a kinge. So the Peopell of England will be governed by a kinge; and rather than not have a kinge, they will have 7, as formerly they have had. Some againe would have the Parlament to settell and governe the kingdome without the Kinge, but that is as unlikely as the other, and contrary to your late voates not to alter the Government by Kinge, Lords, and Commons; for if both Houses do it alone, then the Kinge is excluded. But, Sir, we must all acknowledge that we are bounde to do the uttermoste we can to save the kinge-dome, now it hathe bine declared to us twice or thrice."

Nathaniel Stephens brought to the aid of the Parliament, not only his good common sense, but as much courage also as any other partizan in that great struggle.

The Hall of Chavenage, his manor-seat, which is still standing in its original elevation, and filled with furniture of the age of Elizabeth, contains to this day a considerable collection of armour and weapons which have seen the fields of battle in the neighbourhood of the Cotswold range, on which it is seated.

It happened, when the period was approaching which was to terminate, for a time, the hopes of the royalists by the death of the King, that Stephens was keeping the festival of Christmas at Chavenage. In the midst of the festivity Ireton arrived at the house, with a view to press his instant attendance in Parliament, to support, by his vote and influence, the intended measures of Cromwell against the life of Charles; and the following legendary tale, which, in its less supernatural incidents, is based upon facts, has arisen from his conduct on this critical occasion. His sister is reported to have urged him strongly to withhold his voice, and, in a moment

of enthusiasm, to have prophesied the extinction of his line in case he became implicated in the murder of the Monarch. Ireton, assisted by Robert Stephens, brother to the Colonel, spent the night in entreating him to comply; and, at length, though Nathaniel's feelings were in agreement with his sister's arguments, and though he even imagined himself to have been warned in a vision not to be assisting in the death of the King, he nevertheless suffered himself ultimately to be overruled, and, giving a reluctant acquiescence, departed with Ireton. In the May following he was seized with a fatal sickness. Arrived at the extremity of life, he is stated to have called together his relations, in order to take his last adieus, and to express his regret for his participation in the execution of the King.

When all his relatives had assembled, and their several well-known equipages were crowding the courtyard, and the sick man was now breathing his last, the household were surprised to observe that another coach, ornamented in even more than the gorgeous embellishments of that splendid period, and drawn by black horses, was approaching the door in great solemnity.

When it had arrived, making a short stay, the door of the vehicle opened in some unseen manner, and, clad in his shroud, the shade of the Colonel glided into the carriage, and, the door instantly closing upon him, the coach rapidly, but silently, withdrew from the house,—not, however, with such speed but there was time to perceive that the driver was a beheaded man, that he was arrayed in the royal vestments, with the Garter moreover on his leg, and the star of that illustrious order upon his breast. No sooner had the coach arrived at the gateway of the manor-court than the whole appearance vanished in flames of fire. The story farther maintains that, to this day, every Lord of Chavenage, dying in the manor-house, takes his departure in this ominous conveyance.

This legend, in its view of the politics of the family at that time, and in its general outline, is sufficiently correct to be taken as the basis of a poetical tale ; and in that character it is presented to the courtesy of the reader.

The late Sir Philip Stephens, Baronet, was the last surviving male of this ancient line.

The reader, who is aware of the hypocritical Deism which marked one class of the opponents of King Charles I., and the blind Calvinism which governed the honest section of the Puritan party, will not consider the sentiments attributed to Ireton and Hugh Peters as too strongly stated ; and he will be the more of this opinion if the individual characters of these unhappy personages ever happen to come under his immediate contemplation.

In the story now offered to the public the name of Nathaniel has been changed into Richard, which was his father's appellation, and is more suited to versification. Rachel's real name also is Abigail ; this has likewise been considered to be a designation too intractable for poetical purposes ; while, that she might stand more in agreement with the habits of her age, a name from the Holy Scriptures has still been selected for her ; which, perhaps, is due to the piety of the family, as we have deprived Nathaniel of that distinction.

The prophecy of Rachel has found its fulfilment : the male line of Nathaniel is extinct ; and the representative in the female line, by the union of a Townsend

of Castle Townsend, has conveyed the ancient inheritance to Maurice Fitzgerald Townsend Stephens, M.A. who now holds the estates.

The pedigree annexed shows the connexion which existed between the families of Cromwell, Ireton, and Stephens, at the period of the Rebellion; it also gives the descent of the estates of Chavenage. For this addition we are indebted to the liberality and research of Sir Charles Young, Garter King of Arms. It will be seen that Rachel and Robert were daughter and son of Nathaniel Stephens, M.P. for Gloucestershire, and not brother and sister, as stated in the foregoing tale. In the Poem, however, the legendary relationship has been preserved, as it seems to confer on the respective characters a more natural right of the free discussion of the momentous subject brought under their consideration.

PEDIGREE AND CONNEXIONS



EDWARD LUGG, of Lugwardine,
co. Hereford.

Henry Stephens, of Procester, oh. 1552. = Alice, da. and coheir; died before 1552.

Edward Stephens, of Chavenage and Eastington, co. Glouc.; died 22 Oct. 1587, æt. circ. 64. = Joan, da., and at length heir, of Richd Fowler, of Stonehouse; died 5 Aug. 1587.

Richard Stephens, of Chavenage and Eastington; died 1599. = Margaret, da. of Edward St. Loe, of Knighton, co. Wilts; died 4 Mar. 1591.

Nathaniel Stephens, of Eastington & Chavenage, M.P. for co. Glouc.; born 1589, died 22 May, 1660. = Catherine, da. of Robert Beale, of Pryors Marston, co. Warw.; died 22 Feb. 1632.

Richard Stephens, of Eastington; born 1620, died 4 Mar. 1678.

Anne, da. of Sir Hugh Cholmley, of Whithy, co. York, kt. and bt.; mar. 1654, died 17 Nov. 1712.

Robert Stephens, Serjeant-at-Law; born 1622, died unm. 1671.

Abigail; born 1628, mar. Sir Edward Hanley.

Richard Stephens, M.P.; died 1705.

Robert Stephens; died 1732.

Elizabeth; died 27 June, 1695, æt. 37.

John Packer, of Shellingford, co. Berks; died 25 Sep. 1682.

Sir Edward Hannes, of Westminster, M.D.; died July, 1710.

Anne; born 1680, mar. 1698, died 1701.

John Willis, of Reddingfield, co. Suffolk; died 1764.

Temperance, only child; living 1764.

Rev. Henry Willis, of Iron Acton, co. Glouc.; born 1739, died 4 June, 1794.

Jane, da. of Richd. Lubbock, of North Walsham, co. Norf.; mar. 1765, died Apr. 1799.

Henry Hannes Willis, assumed the name and arms of Stephens, 1801; died S. P.

Harriot, 3 da.

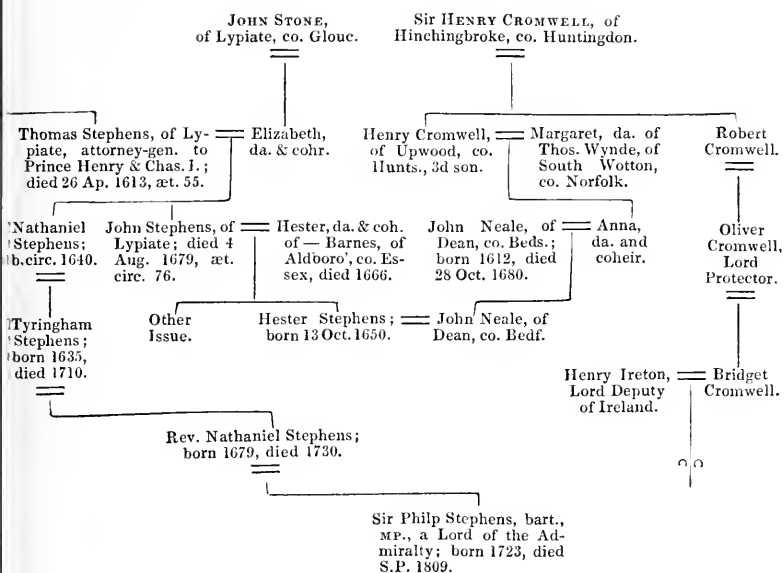
Richmond Shute, of Iron Acton, co. Glouc.

Rev. M. F. Townsend Stephens took the surname and arms of Stephens by royal licence, 30 Dec. 1826.

Alice Elizabeth, only surviving child.

o o

OF THE FAMILY OF STEPHENS.



Chabenage.

“ Perhaps it may turn out a sang,
Perhaps turn out a sermon.”

BURNS.



Chavenage.



IN times gone by, when England less pursued
The lust of wealth, and kept the mind subdued ;
Ere days utilitarian first began
To harden and debase the heart of man ;
When a more simple world viewed Gospel-law
With eyes of love and duty ; and with awe
Shrunk from temptation,—sickened to behold
The joys seductive, and the sins of gold :—
Then, thwarted less baptismal graces, pure
Rose from the font the infant more secure ;
For, seeking God the first, and self the last,
And fond indulgences behind her cast,

The soul, world-fearing, looking for release,
Asked but the single path which led to peace ;
Sought to the Church for guidance, and the way,
E'en as she pointed, hastened to obey.

Then higher held the Church her holy days,
And mixed with comely feasts her prayer and praise,
As sacred saint's, or martyr's reverend name,
Our blest ensamples, still returning came.

As some bright star, departing in the west,
Leaves lucid on the depths of Heaven exprest
A train of former glory, and a light
To guide the toiling passengers of night ;
So these, all duly ranged our days among,
In turn led on the soul to grateful song :
The holy Church on high our thanks might hear
For those " departed in His faith and fear,"
And into Jesus' heart of mercy came
The nation's prayers that we might die the same.

Then every season lifted up her voice,
Turned the glad eye to Heaven, and bade rejoice ;

Kept living in our hearts those names which told
Of souls confirmed in faith, in suffering bold;
Deep in self-searching,—true in prayer and strong,—
Patterns of grace to lead the world along.

Remembered thus the saints in Heaven passed by,
Till, ushering in the Majesty on high,
Dark Winter, hailing Christ, the rest surpassed,
Proclaiming Him the Lord—"the First—the Last,"
As dawned that holy day, of all the theme,
When Mary bore the Babe in Bethlehem.

At that high time, then did the darkening year,
Bereft of sun, in other light appear;
For Christ's dear love beamed forth the halls and towers,
Warm with long feastings,—and the gracious hours,
Big with their gifts, their charities, and praise,
Enlarged themselves, and lengthened into days,
Till pinching coldness, enmity, and dearth,
Twelve days and nights were banished from the earth.

Now once again the world began to ride
Beneath the stars which shine at Christmas-tide;

Wide through the land, in many a merry hall,
Knight, squire, and yeoman, peasant feasted all.
The kingdom late anointed Charles withstood,
Had cried for liberty—had striven in blood;
Defeated often—still her strength renewed—
With armies lost, but courage unsubdued—
Still rising fresh from many a broken field,
Had forced the royal chivalry to yield;
Foul war was ended—doubtful peace came in,—
The feverish quiet of exhausted sin.

The people now their recent wars forget,—
Devizes victory,—Essex' lines beset,—
Sir Bevill's death,—or ruined Waller's flight,—
Or Rowton Heath,—or Naseby's fatal fight ;—
And lordly Noble,—Puritan severe,—
The cold Republican,—or Cavalier,—
Meeting once more around the banquet-board
Which hailed the birth-day of our common Lord,
And wearied in the stern and dubious strife,
Welcomed with joy Old England's peaceful life.

The Christmas-feast was spread in Chavenage Hall,
And Richard Stephens, 'mid his kinsfolk all,

'Mid tenants and retainers, sat on high,
And blandly ruled his full festivity.
A leader he, who strong in arms appeared,
When Charles at Nottingham his standard reared;
No aid unto the care-worn King he brought,
But for the Commons still he spake and fought.
Ill-guided House! where, honoured in debate,
Sent from his native shire, he duly sate.
A man he was, who, gentle in his mind,
And slow to judge, was in his judgments kind;
Deeming the King ruled in despite of law,
And, led by craftier men, feared not to draw
His hasty sword,—the scabbard left behind,—
His heart more bold, the weaker was his mind.
In many a fight proud victory led him on,
Gilded his plume—upon his banner shone—
Cheered every follower with the conqueror's glee,—
And each claimed glory and renown—save he!
He, oft by war to cruel deeds betrayed,
With soul still righteous shrunk and felt afraid;
His angry wrongs—his party-wrath allowed—
Quelled was the victor, and abashed the proud:
Gladly he saw his guilt-stained service done,
When the rash Commons the bad cause had won;

Gladly he hailed the sprightly dance, the lays
Of merry Christmas, with its jocund days ;
Welcomed alike each neighbour and each friend,
Bade love awake, and angry passions end.

Clear through the mullioned windows shone the light,
Led the benighted, and repelled the night ;
Lit the paved way, and blazon'd welcome o'er
The proud carved heraldry above the door.

Within the feast was all in order laid,
Each in his rank, the company arrayed ;
The host amidst his gentle kinsfolk sate,
Leading the banquet in beseeeming state.
The seneschal in chain of gold was graced,
In due degree each follower he placed ;
Till, as the lengthening board approached the door,
He smiled in charity upon the poor,
And gave large fragments, with dispensing wand,
To fill the widow's, or the orphan's hand.

Now rose the host, and, pledging every guest,
The kindly feelings of his heart expressed.

“ Kinsfolk, and friends, we meet to welcome in
The hour that brought the Conqueror of sin ;
We hail the dawn of mercy from on high,
And lift the song of angels in the sky,—
‘ Glory to God ! ’ let every bosom sing,
With thankful spirit hail the Saviour-King !
Hail Him, my friends ! and make the song complete,
And, ‘ in good-will to all men ’ let us meet.
Thus, brethren all, let each his brother here
Freely forgive ; so with the opening year
Meek Peace shall enter, and our God shall see
His birth acknowledged, and his flock agree !
Turn not your minds to actions past away,
But as the Lord invites us, and the day,—
Peace let us seek, with resolution good
To shun for evermore the stains of blood.
Come ! in these feelings, neighbours, let us join,
Drink me to Peace in grateful cups of wine.”

* The board arose, and bade with single voice,
Peace enter in, and every heart rejoice ;
With generous wine each silver goblet flowed,
Each breast responded, “ Shun the stain of blood ! ”

Thus, as the jovial party blithely drained
The mellow cup, and flowing friendship gained,
A slender page, fast by the shady wall,
Beckoned the master's brother from the hall.
"A stranger from afar," he softly said,
"Your presence waits,"—and to a chamber led.
"Robert," the traveller spoke, "are we alone?"—
"Ireton!" he answered :—"leave us, boy, begone!—
Say, is it fixed? Is it matured—the plan?
And do we sacrifice the captive man?"
"Yes, Robert, as we would events proceed—
That he must die, was yesternight decreed;
Since then with ceaseless haste I hither come,
Your brother's voice condemns him to the tomb.—
Doubtful you seem,—still that the King may die
His voice is needful,—he must not deny."
"But, Ireton, thou proposest," Robert said,
"The only step he will refuse to tread!"
"Fear not," said Ireton : "Richard, good and meek,
In action strong, in resolution weak;
Bold to ride down the dangers of the field,
But, pressed in council, ever found to yield—
We may obtain,—and, with this seemly lure,
A host of waverers are held secure."

“ True, Ireton,” Robert answered, “ he can guide
Full many a doubting spirit to our side ;
Many will say, if he the movement head,
Let tyrant Charles be numbered with the dead !
But for himself,—though dauntless in the fight,
None more determined for his country’s right,
Still doth he hold the King a sacred name,
And dreams that Monarchs heaven-descended came ;
Fearless to meet and curb a lawless King,
He still esteems the throne a holy thing.
Then, as thou knowest, his superstitious mind,
To visions, dreams, and omens is inclined ;
Frenzied Hugh Peters hath his soul perplexed
With gospel-calls, and many a jangling text ;—
Things we may smile at, but he holds as true
The frantic doctrines of that gloomy crew—
Their divinations—and, from heavenly homes,
To warn God’s servants how some spirit comes !—
You well may scoff ; but he believes these tales,
And every Bible-word with him prevails !
And more,—I doubt some phantom of this kind
Hath crossed of late his gospel-ridden mind ;
Hath all our schemes foreshadowed—hath foreshewn
The King in trial, and the empty throne,—

Warned him to shun our steps;—and, as he sees,
So he obeys these ghostly reveries.
Alas ! his voice, if needful, we with pain
Shall gain it,—you will ask for it in vain.”

“ Doubtless,” in answer Ireton then began,
“ He is a thoughtful, melancholy man ;
Loves justice,—he is pure,—and, passing blame,
His worldly feelings are in gospel-frame.
His mind is not as ours,—released, and free,
Ready to seize the things that better be.
Hard, when the Commons laboured in debate
To compass Strafford’s necessary fate,—
Hard to obtain his voice !—Perhaps as hard
Now that the crown we strike at !—Perhaps, debarred
By omens, calls, and visions, he will stand,
And prophesy of downfalls through the land.
But from the Book if he a sentence draw—
Bow we the head, nor speak against the law !
Each virtuous speech—each maxim he may bring—
Trace we at once to the Almighty King.
Still keep him unoffended—less on guard,—
While watchful we will ever rest prepared

Some slight exception in his words to take,
And where he frames conclusions, gently break.
As for his visions—we may see them too—
So should he dream—I boldly dream—or you !
Full many a dream that led our ranks along
Was never dreamt !—Full many a prophet's song
That charmed our followers forth to smile and
 bleed,
Drew inspiration only from our need.
So will we now ; and, for the nonce inspired,
See clearest sights—if visions are required.
Then urge the plea,—which will his soul oppress,—
That he deserts his party in distress ;
Having engaged us in the battle's dust,—
Helped us,—encouraged us his truth to trust,—
Lo ! in the point of victory, or defeat,
He heads a cruel, and a false retreat !
Often this plea, as many a soul can say,
Hath conscience stifled !—turned from grace away—
If grace there be—convictions overborne ;
At once the tempter's victim, and his scorn !
Yes, yes ! We shall o'errule him ! Let us send
And beg his presence—beg his feast may end.”

Then Robert, darkly smiling as he heard,
Called for the page, and gave him Ireton's word.
Again his silent course the stripling treads
Where through the shadowy hall the banquet spreads,
And, 'twixt the master's and his sister's ear,
The message gave. It startled them to hear !

Summoned, now Richard entered—not alone,
For meek, and beautiful, his sister shone,
Like some pure angel, in the Plotter's sight,
Beaming with innocence, and mercy's light.
Leading her hand he came, and seemed to bring
Almost some chosen spirit, who might sing
Nearest the throne, amid redeemed souls,
To harmonize creation, as it rolls !

Now as the gentle maiden entered in,
Her gracious presence checked the man of sin,—
And Ireton silent stood. But Robert, used
To thwart her goodness, and too oft refused
Her virtuous counsels, soon arose, and broke
Through all her tenderness, as thus he spoke :—
“ Richard, the General Ireton comes to gain
Our votes.—We end a groaning nation's pain !

The anxious Council sit in deep debate,
And hearts courageous fix our country's fate."

" Brother, perhaps I read you.—Ireton, say,
Is it the King?—Doth he approach his day?"

" E'en as you say! By his false father nurst,
Charles is evasive, and we cannot trust
His specious promises. In every plan
We find an artful and a dangerous man.
He palters with us,—and by craft would gain
His former pōmps,—his old imperious reign.
Still in his heart he leans upon his friends,
His name, in secret, to their faction lends;—
Longs his prerogative again to win,—
Yearns for his court,—his theatres,—his sin,—
His Church papistical,—his tastes,—his pride:—
These were his life,—nor are they cast aside.
For these he heeds not what the truce he makes,
Nor what the treaty—what the oath he breaks!
Trust him we cannot! All our toil is vain,—
Our patriot-blood,—and every martyr slain,—
Unless, with God to aid us, in his fate
Crushing the faction, we ensure the State!"

“ But we ourselves,” said Richard, with a sigh,
“ Full seldom fought, except behind a lie !
Our schemes were virtuous, but I mourned to see
How we pursued them in duplicity.
We cannot urge that plea !”—“ Then we have done
Nothing,” said Ireton, “ and our hope is none !
While Charles still lives, his party is alive ;
And while they live, ’tis ours to watch and strive :
If watching ever—lo, our quiet goes !
If careless once—he rises, and o’erthrows !”

“ But by what power,” he answered, “ can we reach
Our hands unto the crown, and kings impeach ?
Say, by what law can we condemn to bleed
Him from whom all our laws at first proceed ?
Blood out of law is murder !—Do ye stand
Prepared with such a stain to spot the hand ?—
Do we—God’s men—with all our prayerful hosts—
Our gracious calls—our preachings—and our boasts—
End all in this—to murder by consent
A victim purchased from imprisonment ?
Is this God’s triumph ?—Do you buy a man
For slaughter ?—And propose to me the plan ?”

“ Dear brother,” Rachel asked, “ art thou not sworn?
Or is that oath from God’s high record torn?
Doth not the realm, called by the King to meet
In solemn council—solemn oaths repeat?
Say—are ye not by sacred compact bound
In loyal duty to the sovereign crowned?
Do ye not pledge God’s help, if ye be true—
If false, that He withdraw his peace from you?
Are not your votes on this condition given,
And ratified by strict appeal to Heaven?
Is not this true?—How can ye stoop to think
Of death, and not in deepest perjury sink?
In treason—and in murder?—Surely things
Lose all their meaning, when we speak of kings!
Is this at Westminster the counsel high?
Fly from it like a plague-spot!—Brother, fly!”

“ Peace, Rachel, peace!” said Robert, “ nor again
Such scruples urge!—They are the sport of men!
Brother, dear Rachel’s words need no reply:
You are not moved by them?—we pass them by.—
Still, as your wont is ever, you have shown
Strong and deep thoughts, and hard to be o’erthrown.

But pardon, if, in speech unskilful, we
Show where, perhaps, we differ—where agree.

“ Doubtless no forms exist by which to bring
Charges or penalties against the King ;
Nor any court which can admit the plea :
Free are his actions—and his person free.
Such is our law.—But what if kings arise
Who crush all law—all ancient liberties ?
Who civil rights deny—and claim mankind
Vassals created for the Royal mind ?
Who think no injury wrong—no scorn misplaced—
No rigour pain,—if to the Sceptre traced ?
And what, if grasping and usurping all,
This earthly domination is too small,
And the crowned bigot, with a gory rod,
Shall interfere between our souls and God ;
Shall force the people to his forms, and days,
His penances, his formal prayers, and praise ;
Set up the idols and the snares of Rome ;
Or elevate a Romish Pope at home ?
What—what remains in such a tortured land ?
Is it to bow the head, and fold the hand ?

Say, because kings within this realm have reigned,
Must we in soul and body stand enchained ?
Or, if the Crown will out of law be strong,
Why—hail it outlaw! and redress the wrong!
Howe'er, I press it not. O let me speak
To that, where brave men fear—where strong are weak
O let me turn your mind upon your home,
And bid your spirit to your chambers come!
And warn you there—where all men love alike—
There thou art stricken, if thou dost not strike!

“ Not always, if the King his life retain,
Shall we bind down the lion in his chain;
Chance, or his friends, or his deep guile alone,
May set him free! Think on his heart of stone!
Think on his wrath! survey thine every deed!
Thy patriot valour! Think what patriots bleed!
Lo, one wide tyranny invades us all:
Fairfax and Cromwell,—Ireton, thou must fall!
Vainly in Naseby shone thy valour pure!
Vain, noble Manchester on Marston Moor!
Richard, in vain thy gallant actions done;
Vain all thy care, and every trophy won!

Vain o'er thy children every sweetest prayer !
Vain, gentle Rachel, all thy love and care !
Thyself some licensed courtier tears away,
Thy charms a lure, thy purity a prey.
No saintly dwelling from the scourge exempt,
And we pass out in suffering and contempt.
Plain are these dangers. Thou too oft hast stood
Against his pride,—too often hast subdued :
He saw thy flag, when first from Gloucester driven
His armies quailed. Thou canst not be forgiven.
Thy injuries rankle in his vengeful heart,
And thou must strike him, or thou stricken art !”

“ Justly,” then Ireton said, “ thy brother sees
Both whence our troubles spring, and whence our ease.
In civil strife the limit is but one—
Extinction !—or the struggle is not done !
When the Lord bade his chosen people rise,
And chase from Canaan all his enemies,
Still ‘ Spare them not,’ resounds the strict command,
‘ But slay them utterly,’ and cleanse the land !
‘ Slay’—lest the ancient leavens festering swell,
And poison those who enter in to dwell ;

Lest the rank sins of a forgotten few
Spread through the tribes, and Israel subdue.
We read, when Saul shortened the Holy Word,
Sparing the 'bleating flock' and 'lowing herd'—
Though babes and sucklings—all, save Agag, slain;
Still, found unfaithful, cursed was his reign.
Sir, these texts say our service is not done,
While of God's enemies we spare but one!
They tell us such remission is a crime,—
That it will visit us in after time.
Whether the stain, in slow increasing strength,
Will creep upon us, and o'erwhelm at length,
Or whether, more immediately, the Lord
Will punish those who contravene His word;
Still must we hold it as a law revealed,
That slaughters follow the victorious field;
That to extinguish is the heavenly plan,
Nor spare 'mid hostile hosts the leading man.
Thus far the Word!—But often sceptred hands,
In ravening rule despoil the prostrate lands;
And liberties, and even thought, bow down,
And mind—God's image—crouches to the crown;
Then must it not our first high duty be
From regal rule to set our country free?—

To wipe out kings?—And in an equal land,
In equal freedom, see her children stand?
This is our duty,—to set wide the gate—
That Truth may enter—and the good be great!
E'en now from Heaven let golden days return—
Let the whole earth in equal rights be born.
No more the infant nursling on the throne,
His brethren claims and calls mankind his own;
No more shall trifling minds, in ermine wrapt,
Nor souls effeminate, in velvet lapt,
Nor nauseous crimes, in crowns ancestral shine,
And stain the purple by a right divine!
But days shall dawn when Fame, on every side,
Opens to all alike her portals wide;
When for the prize, with equal hopes, may run
The king-descended—or the shepherd's son.
Now courtly Favour ceases to oppress
With cold denials, nor withholds success;
Interest no more shall pander, and assign
Rewards to wealthy pride, or ancient line.
I see our country take a higher grade,
And fair ambition every breast pervade;
I see her sons alike, in equal race,
Claim all her honours, and the highest place!

Each, in the generous struggle, as he flies
Before his rival to attain the prize,
Still bears his country forward,—till on high
Her spreading glories fill the encircling sky!
These days belong to us! Nor shall one life—
And he the author of our civil strife—
A bigot, and a tyrant, interpose
'Twixt us and virtue, and the prospect close.
Come, then, arise, and smite the guilty head,
And pacify with blood our martyrs dead!
Let us tread down distinctions, and set free
This noble land in glorious liberty!
O let his plotting mind for ever cease,
And gain domestic safety—public peace!”

“ Alas!” then Chavenage’ lord in sorrow said,
“ My harassed soul is ’gainst her conscience led,—
Not unforeseen!—Long, in my heart, I’ve known
The Monarch’s greatest failing is his throne!
Many prolonged the war from other cause
Than regal tyrannies and broken laws;
The Papal Church was not the great offence,
And rights invaded—often a pretence;

Not a proud court, nor pleasure-loving queen, —
But the true crime was in the sceptre seen.
I love not Commonwealths; that general race
For power, distinction, government, and place,
Breeds bribery, malice, fraud—nor is it loth
To slay a rival by a factious oath.
Nor are man's vices lessened, nor restrained,
Nor is the rule achieved a rule maintained.
The mob exalts some demagogue on high,
His new-found virtues fill the astonished sky;
He rules for self the many-headed fool,
And when they tire, is murdered for his rule.
Another idol gains his lofty place,
And the mob hail him—blessed with every grace.
Soon every grace to every vice is turned,
They hail him demon, and his corse is spurned;
Till change some feigning despot brings at length,
Who binds the people, and controls by strength.
Nor do I dread the King's returning power:—
Feeble his hand,—and distant seems the hour,
Ere royal Charles, in domineering pride,
Pass through the land and smite from side to side.
I fear him not—our cause is blest and just;
The Lord is with us,—in his strength I trust!

But bear with me a space,—I would explain
My inmost feelings—though I speak with pain :—
I look beyond this world !—and I perceive
Purer communion than this world can give !
Dreamer !—you say, with visionary brain !
Nor can I tell—nor can my words restrain !

“ In the last summer’s heat, within the grove,
Musing on many things, my ways to prove ;
Tracing, in the late wars, the life I’ve led,
The hearts I’ve broken—the pure blood I’ve shed,—
The friendships rended,—and the altars stained,
While still uncertain any good obtained ;
Mournful I sat, my eyes were turned above ;
In fear I asked,—‘ Be these the works of love ?’
Mid-day the hour—the scorching sun was high,
And sultry summer glowed along the sky ;
Languid with heat the playful lamb was still,
The kine were standing in the gravelly rill,
The birds were silent,—and the tuneful sweep
Of humming insects lulled the world to sleep.
All but I rested. Doubtfully I turned
Where the glade ended, and the solstice burned ;

To Heaven I prayed that I might trespass less,
And have my footsteps ruled in graciousness.
Sudden, methought some brilliant star did shine
Just where the earth and the horizon join ;
Its rays augmenting through the æther spread,
Till, flowing forth, they filled the leafy glade ;
Then, as it seemed, the planet left the sky—
Gleaming more lustrous, as it came more nigh ;
Till bearing onwards 'mid the glorious flood,
Hard by my feet the dazzling column stood.
The beams revolving opened in my sight,
When, pure as sapphire-beams, in tender light,
A spirit issued from the pillared flame,
And beckoned me—and called upon my name :
A child of Heaven—a form of glory made—
Clear lightnings harmless round the figure played !
Awe-struck I knelt, prostrate on earth was borne,—
Whispered my soul, ' Woe ! woe that I was born !'
Vile, vile I felt, my hope was ta'en away,
And, like a worm, I grovelled to the clay ;
Swift through my memory sins careered along,
My prayers were speechless on my palsied tongue ;
I clasped my hands,—'twas all I could,—and tried
To make some sign for pardon ere I died !

‘Richard!’ he spake—I feared to lift my face—
‘Richard!’—and, Rachel, what a form of grace!
Robert, that sainted shade, our father’s soul,
Stood there before me—and my heart was whole.
O how I wished his hand upon my head,
And, as there wont to be, his blessing said!
Alas! in vain I yearned for it—in vain
I asked it! But he answered thus again:
‘My son,’ that much-loved voice, long-lost, did say,—
Sunk my fond soul in tenderness away,—
‘Richard, think not, when life is gone, my son,
That cares parental, and our loves are gone!
Think not that Death’s cold hand that warmth can chill,
Nor with the body all the father kill!
No!—far above the watchful spirit views
His offspring tempted—and their path pursues;
In unseen influence strives his child to hold,
And keeps the wanderer still within the fold.
Therefore I come!—for, watching from on high,
We see the serpent ere his wiles are nigh.
I come permitted!—Heaven, in tender grace,
Grants a short visit to this once-loved place;
Where erst your cherished souls, around my heart,
Twined, sweetly grew, and made the happiest part.

Listen, my son :—For great eventual good,
The Lord hath tried you with internal feud ;
And, now in council, now in angry fight,
Thy soul perplexed hath sometimes swerved from right.
But the net now upon thy path is spread !
I warn you in all tenderness to tread !
Against the King false traitors bare the blade !
And thee they implicate—require thine aid :
My son—I warn you—have no part therèin—
And so may Christ forgive all former sin !
I warn you, Richard—if thou dost partake
In that anointed blood, God will forsake
Thee, and thy house ! Thy race shall pass away,
And thy line perish from the face of day !
Blots ! blots too many to thy right-hand cleave !
As now thou hopest for mercy—mercy give !’

“ Thus spake the sainted shade in accents kind,
His earnest words were stamped upon my mind ;
Stored in my heart they rest !—and they pass by
Your arguments of state necessity.
That vision came, and brought the Almighty’s will,
And spake again the words, ‘ Thou shalt not kill !’

I cannot injure that anointed head,—
I have been warned—have spoken with the dead !”

“ Brother,” said Robert, with expression bland,
“ Sights such as these are told of through the land ;
But rather are they errors, as I deem,
Of brain-struck fancies, or some fevered dream !”

“ What !” said the soldier, “ What !—shall we deny
That shades returning come and prophesy ?
Must I believe all intercourse is done
When souls departed from this world have gone,
And that the Lord communion doth deny
’Twixt saints on earth and spirits in the sky ?
How read I then the book ?—When Endor’s dame
On Samuel called, the prophet’s spirit came !
So when the Lord his servant Job had left,
And for a time he stood of God bereft ;
When Satan, eager, in malicious joy,
Rushed on his prey, and hastened to destroy,—
Lo ! as they told how fate, succeeding fate
In wild destruction, swept away his state ;
How the Sabeans flocks and herds had ta’en,
And, tempest-smitten, every child was slain,

Till, naked as the infant left the womb,
The naked man was ready for the tomb ;
While o'er his body foul disease was spread,
And clustering plague-spots marked him for the dead,—
Lo ! then some pitying Spirit left the sky,
Fearing lest patience in his soul might die,
Veiled in uncertain darkness took his way
Where the young corpses, and the ruin lay,
To preach submission in the deep distress,
And bid the saint be strong in humbleness.
When Jesus in the night his journey set
Across the billows of Gennesaret,
And wave on wave, in mute obedience meet,
Bowed the proud head to kiss His sacred feet ;
Till the Apostles, banishing their sleep,
High on the bosom of the doubtful deep,
Saw Christ approaching through the hazy air,
And, greatly trembling, cried, ‘ A Spirit there ! ’—
Say, did these holy men stand in mistake,
And be there not the shades of which they spake ? ”

“ Brother,” said Robert, “ if the midnight air
Holds such inhabitants, are we their care ? ”

Say, are our lives so spiritual and pure,
That they can commune with us, and endure ?
Oft I admire thy chaste and Christian life,
Oft thy late mildness in our civil strife ;
And thought, if men with spirits may converse,
And learn the secrets of the storied hearse,
Thine might it be. But, putting off the clay,
Souls shun mankind, and hate the deeds of day.

“ When midnight spreads her universal reign,
And lust, and malice, and the thirst of gain,
And anger sleep, and fraud a truce doth keep,
And the wide world is sinless and asleep ;
Then nature beckons from their still retreat
The purer spirits, for mankind unmeet.
Then fays and spirits of the hill and dell,
Whose lightsome forms the poet's fancies tell ;
Beings that wont, ere evil held her sway,
To claim with man the brighter hours of day,
And, innocent of guilt, their time employ
In their sole tribute—gratitude and joy ;
Now startled by the frightful shapes of crime,
Avoid mankind to seek a purer time.

So when the moon pursues her silver path,
And sleep compels to peace each child of wrath,
Then do these beings of a better kind
A holier period for their worship find ;
Then burn their bosoms with more sacred fire,
Their hymns re-echo the angelic choir,
Their dances circle on the unbroken ground,
Types of eternity, in mystic round ;
And Heaven is magnified, as Heaven should be,—
By man, alas ! unseen,—in purity ;
By man, alas ! unheard,—a holy ear
Alone perceives a worship void of fear.
Then teems the grave, and from her gaping womb
Issue the tenants of the silent tomb ;
Noiseless along the shadowy aisles they tread,
And fill with life the mansions of the dead.
They live—but not as once they lived—they see
Distant, but coming, blest eternity ;
And, in a tranquil expectation, wait
Till ripening time evolve their brighter state.
Sickened of life, they shun the ways of men,
And, with the dawn, they hide themselves again ;
Their earthly passions are denied and dead,
Calm all their sorrow, dry the tears they shed ;

Their once-prized joys are refuse in their eyes,
And what they toiled and sinned for, they despise !

“ Lo ! where yon chancel’s narrow window sheds
The moon’s pale lustre o’er sepulchral beds,
Oft stands a noble shade ;—but not to mourn,
With sighs indignant, his too hasty urn ;
Nor soothe his mind that heralds, in their pride,
Have blazoned forth the worth in which he died ;
Nor with a soldier’s fondness doth he scan,
Those iron weeds, in which he played the man ;
The shield which graced and guarded, tarnished now,
The hardy helmet, like the frowning brow,
Bowed down in age, and parted into dust,
The untamed spear a little pile of rust,
The gauntlet—pledge of honour—like the hand,
The banner, surcoat, and the trusty brand :
These be not little thoughts that vex his mind—
The soul departed casts no look behind ;—
Content to lose some toilsome years of strife,
He loves the wound which led him out of life.
But though all grief for ever is at rest,
Still, till the summons calls him to the blest,

He views, with solemn joy, each day's decrease,
And, in its coming, he foretastes his peace.
So tell they, when the shades of night extend,
Two stricken souls in love-lorn wanderings wend ;
One left—and after her the other drew,
With years still tender, and with hearts still true.
Each form was graceful—beautiful each face,
Gifted, belike, with minds beyond their race ;
Nature had formed them patterns for their day,
But Discord snatched them from the world away.
Lovers they were—but, so stern fate decreed,
Both were derived from Houses disagreed ;
Asunder torn—their plighted troth denied—
She parted—left her heart—and so she died.
He smiled no more—and seldom word he gave—
The same moon lit his passage to the grave.
But, as in Heaven the only law is Love,
And charity the sweet command above,
So Death slays not this feeling in the breast,
But leaves it purer—vanquished all the rest.
Lo ! as they walk no passions fire the mind,
Though round her form his shadowy arm entwined,
Though o'er his shoulder streams, like misty air,
Soft on his pallid breast her waving hair ;

But as a brother's and dear sister's mind
In chastest love, and clearest truth are joined,
So are they lovers now!—their trial sore
Proved truth in either, and they love the more.
Thus happy souls, in virtue passed away,
In sweet communion wait the appointed day;
And linked already in that placid love
Which binds together all the hosts above,
They tarry only till the summons come
Which calls to enter the Eternal Home.
These be the thoughts which sainted spirits feel,
They come to warn not,—neither to reveal;
Their words are not for us, nor do we wake
When we accept them—we do dream—mistake—
And vex our minds—and wrong conclusions draw—
That the dead warn us, passes Nature's law,”

“ Richard, thy brother,” Ireton then began,
“ Well hath developed that mysterious plan,
Which often gives departed shades to sight,
And peoples still the solitudes of night.
Doubtless the souls in grace oft leave their rest,
Freed from their death,—blest communing with blest;

Oft meet in deep unalterable peace,
Till Heaven arrive, and this sad world shall cease.
But still these souls, far summoned into grace,
Are vexed with earth no more,—no more retrace
Their former little schemes, nor turn the mind
To cares, and sins, and follies left behind.
Still fallen man is not unguided left,
Blind 'mid temptations,—nor of light bereft;
Nor that all-glorious world shut out from view,
Which, hour by hour, our steps draw nearer to.
Nor is it darkness all—no warning given
What the high Will—the providence of Heaven.
Not so deserted we. For when God's will
Some crowning act is ready to fulfil,
Then the event will awful signs foretell,
And voices whisper the almighty spell,
Unseen, but clearly felt, the times will bear
A shape mysterious,—and God's Spirit there!
So hath it lately been. Attend, I pray,
Whilst how the Lord was heard I briefly say.

“ Two varying plans, and marked with difference wide
To blend in union long we fondly tried,

Long strove in vain the Lord's high cause to serve,
The fallen King long laboured to preserve ;
Laboured to set on high God's word again,
Simple and pure—purged every Papal stain.
In this discordant toil, we, day by day,
Questioned the conscience, bent ourselves to pray ;
Deep in our souls, and in God's sacred word,
And many painful preachings, sought the Lord.
Two nights have passed, since, pale with constant care,
With midnight watching, and with high-wrought prayer,
Cromwell was in the choir,—and prayed with him
Peters—God's man !—and Hazelrigge, and Pym,
And holy men, who, through the live-long night,
Watched for the Lord, and prayed for clearer sight.
Still o'er our heads, the darksome roofs among,
Hour followed hour in heavy course along,
And silent flitted by, on drooping wings,
Voiceless and dark, like evil-omened things,
Until the dim and oil-spent lamps begun
To blanch and sicken in the rising sun,
And stealthy Dawn crept the pale aisles along,
We all unheard,—and downcast were the strong !
E'en then it was,—for God will often try,
With toil prolonged, our faith and constancy,—

Then, as with watching and with sleep oppressed,
The prayer-worn suppliants weary sunk to rest ;
When tired each preacher—harassed every saint,
When zealous dealings with the Lord grew faint,
And man no more could labour ;—straight began
The Spirit in Hugh Peters,—holy man !
All prayer was ended, exhortation none,—
Our trust—our ardent expectation gone !
Each in his stall sunk back with visage dark,
The accepted layman, and the gifted clerk ;
No answer sent,—to slay no sign was given,—
Slow justice halted,—dumb the voice of Heaven !

“ Then rose the Preacher !—His pale hand he spread
Upon the sacred volume, and he said,
In deep and solemn tones,—the while his eye
Pierced into Heaven as he gazed on high,—
Shrinking with awe,—in spirit,—yet afraid,
His soul he emptied, and to God he said :
‘ Father ! who searchest all the inward parts
Of Thy true sons, and triest all their hearts,
And ever hast, by burdens and delays,
Their patience proved, who walk upon Thy ways,—

Though ever hearing, still art silent long,
While they in labour and in faith grow strong,—
O now, in mercy, let an answer be,
Announce Thy will,—and let our souls go free !
Long have we asked Thee how we shall entreat
The Man of Sin,—and with what measure mete ?
O let some answer Thy commandment bring !
How shall we deal with the malignant King ?
Our cry for guidance now no more deride ;
I plead Thy promises, Thine own to guide !—
I call for answer, and Thy Book I take !—
I seek Thee there,—Lord Jesus, answer make !
Behold, I open ! Lo!—the page expands,—
Make me an answer, Jesus!—Give commands !'

“ He spake, and sudden burst, in crashing roar,
The fire of Heaven ! The Abbey trembled sore !
Rocked every roof, and, quaking in the din,
Acknowledged that her God had entered in !
While, from beneath, deep echoes rising slow,
Seemed that the dead in terror groaned below !
He oped the book amid the lightning's rage, °
And kindling letters danced upon the page :

Pointing in fear, he turned his head away,
While Cromwell read—‘ This dreamer let us slay !’
Radiant in hope, we all, with one accord,
Answered triumphantly, ‘ It is the Lord !’

“ Now, spirit-led, and, dealing high with God,
Again the Preacher—‘ Shall we bare the rod ?’
Once more the sacred Book he open laid,
And once again God’s counsel he displayed ;
Again the words he pointed—turned his head—
Loudly again the bolder Cromwell read :
Lo ! ‘ All the people with him they shall flee,
And I will smite the King alone !’ said he.
Again, in muttering echo rising slow,
Seemed that the dead in terror groaned below !

“ Once more the Book he opened—raised his hands—
‘ Make me an answer, Jesus !—Give commands !’
Straight o’er the roof now crashed a louder peal,
Each stone-ribbed column like a babe did reel,—
Darted with diamond-beam the angry fire
Of God enforced !—and burst within the choir !
Whether the flame to earth the Book would bear,
Because a greater than the Word was there,—

Or from its high carved desk it shrunk away,
Nor in God's presence would exalted stay,—
In flames the Bible fell ! With rage divine
The hasty Preacher snatched a burning line,
Bolder in spirit, met himself the Lord,
And loud, past thunder, sounded forth the Word !
' It is expedient that one should die,
And that we perish not ! ' did sharply cry.
Thrice answered thus, we all, with one accord,
Shouted triumphantly, ' It is the Lord ! '
While from the vaults, where monarchs sleep below,
Again the groaning echo, rising slow,
Seemed that his sires had witnessed what was done,
And owned the sentence on their guilty son !

“ Thus comes a mandate from the King of kings,
Ushered in thunder,—borne on lightning's wings,
Direct from God, is stamped with marks divine,
And characters from Heaven around it shine !
Compelled, in awe, mankind receive the doom,
And the dead, waking, own it from the tomb !
God does not speak in crazed, uncertain dreams,
Nor float His words on visionary beams ;

Nor are His messengers the ghostly dead,
Who sign and flicker round the haunted bed ;
But call in faith—His answering voice is heard !
Or read in faith—and then responds His word !
This thrice, in faith, His servants did fulfil,
And hearkening thrice, the Lord hath told His will !”

He ended. From her seat, trembling and meek,
Rachel arose, and made essay to speak ;—
She made essay,—but, when she felt how great
The theme to speak upon—her Monarch’s fate—
Backward she shrunk. Still her sore-burdened breast
Craved its relief, and would not be repressed.
Her head she bowed—she waved her slender hand,
Beseeching patience till she could command
Once more her spirit. Then an inward prayer
Cried for assistance, and her voice was clear.

“ Richard ! how shall I speak ? what shall I say ?
What answer shall I make, and not betray,
By my weak efforts, all that I would save,
And, by poor pleadings, hasten to the grave ?
Brother, I know thy heart is one with mine !
I know thou holdest God’s anointed line

As a race sacred ! And thy utmost plan
Was to restrain, not to destroy the man.
O, if thy heart within thee now was rife
To slay thy Monarch, and to take his life,
If vengeance urged thee with her weapons bare,
And dogging wrath forbad thy soul to spare,—
O then would be the time to doubt !—not now !
O then, on bended knees, with lifted brow,
Well would it fit thee, with a judgment clear
To search a heart which longs to be severe.
But now, when mercy moves thee, and inclined
Thy gentle soul all tender is and kind,
When all within thee prompts thy voice to raise
And save the injured,—wherefore these delays ?
How shall we dare our tenderness restrain ?
Or, when the spirit moves to good, refrain ?
When sweet forgivenesses spring up within,
Wilt thou repress them, brother ? Shun the sin !

“ Alas ! I know not, but of shades ye talk,
And how the dead may now arise and walk !
It may be ! For this controversy great
Swalloweth the people, eateth up the state :—

It may be, in the strife are more than men—
And angels, who have left, may come again!
But, if it be, that shade alone speaks true
Who bids you do as others should to you.
Their opened Book may be a settled plot,
Man's practised craft, not God's appointed lot.
The Lord of yore in thund'rings was not found,
Nor when the fire and earthquake shook the ground;
Or, if appealed to, thus He answer made,
In anger spake He, and in wrath displayed.
Thou wert not called within the sacred fane,
Nor oped the volume once and twice again;
Not in thine ears the awful texts were read,
Nor, blasted in thy sight, the pages shred!
But, came to thee, and stood before thine eyes,
That tenderest spirit, sainted in the skies;
Again hast seen, beaming with heavenly grace,
And filled with tenderest love, our father's face!
O, disappoint him not! When he was here,
Thy heart was dutiful; thou didst revere
His lightest word;—thy pious pleasure still
His joys to further, and forestall his will.

These be the steps thy heart rejoiced to tread,
And this the course in the commandment read;
Obey! and let thy father in this path
Complete his joy, and rescue thee from wrath!
But I have heard it said the King must die,
Lest he avenge our course of injury,
Smiting in turn!—Robert, that plea of thine
Stains passing cowardice our ancient line!
Fie! Robert, fie!—Brother, indeed, in kin,
But not in heart! O, in what mood within
Was that thought gendered, Robert, which could say,
‘Rather than punished be, take life away!’
O, dar’st thou urge, when justice would o’ertake
The sinful man, he may acquittance make
With the red dagger? and cut short his thread
Who dares to indicate the guilty head?
Is that thy maxim, Robert? whence obtained?
What page of grace is with that doctrine stained?
Far rather, if deserving punishment,
Bow down the head, and let the knee be bent;
Shun the chastiser not! Receive his charge,
Open thy heart, tell forth thy sin at large;
Though harsh the arraignment, though the scourge be keen,
Yet more than blest, if suffering leaves thee clean!

Is this life all ? and is thy mind intent
Here only to escape from punishment ?
Is Terror dead when dying eyelids fall ?
And Fear interred beneath the funeral pall ?
Doth Justice break her sword across the tomb,
And in Death's silence is God's sentence dumb ?
O, think again ! Can the Lord fail to see
Crime hid by crime ? The cup of misery,
Fiery in wrath, shall burn his throat within,
Who plots escape by adding sin to sin !
But need I thus appeal ? I trust full well
That I o'erstrain your language—Robert, tell !”

“ Rachel, indeed too much ! Whate'er is said,
Honour I follow,—by her dictates led.”

“ Brother, my heart is lighter,—I receive
Thy ready word, and willingly believe.
One thing I further would,—it has been said,
We have no freedom till the King be dead !
I know full well within our ranks have stood
Men from the first who thirsted for his blood
Heartless Republicans—abhorring kings—
Whose words were falsehoods—treaties, hollow things ;

Men who, in hidden treasons only true,
Mixed lies with prayers, the easier to undo :
These men, deceiving man, and mocking God,
Begin to bear, and we to feel the rod.
Avoid them ! They are men of dangerous kind
Who cry for Liberty ! The Christian mind
Seeks not a dangerous licence, and free scope,
Nor views this world as one vast field of hope ;
But fears far rather, and is glad to stand
Restrained in righteous rule, and just command.
Republics are beloved by selfish minds,—
There greediness her full expansion finds !
Ambition can to highest place aspire,
In heart a tyrant, and in tongue a liar !
If by this evil opening to the pride
Of man, our falling country must be tried,
Advance it not, nor with a treacherous hand
Give fresh temptations to thy native land.
'Come,' they will say, 'enter fair Freedom's field,
Display thy virtues, all thy talents wield ;
Allure mankind, convince, and glorious rise,
Claim the first honours,—seize the splendid prize !'
But listen not ! Richard, thou art too kind,
Too good to be man's idol,—too refined !

Here, in thy proper post—Home's holy ground—
Spread thy mild rule and charities around.
O, from ambition turn thy steps away,
Shun the false dealings of this selfish day ;
Soul-killing Fashion, withering up the heart,
Leave with her vanities !—Arise—depart—
And flee away ! Let thy kind breast expand,
Filled with thy duties on thy father's land.
Blest are the lessons of our country homes,
And happiest he who oftenest thither comes !
Who loves to tread the vales his fathers trod,
And, where they rest, still hopes to rest in God !
There many an old hereditary name,
There burnished bearings of ancestral fame,
Beam through the mists which ancient days have spread,
And speak unto the heart ! These raise the dead,—
And, whether shades departed truly come,
These waken thought, and voices from the tomb ;
Mute, but they have a language,—not a stone,
In quaint device, is idle or alone.
Back from departed times each sculpture brings
Saints rich in prayer, or old historic kings ;—
Tells how some champion, nurst within the hall,
Strong in his upright cause, feared not to fall ;

Or donor, from the wealth which God had given,
Endowed mankind with offerings to Heaven ;—
His heart, far fuller than his hands, in prayer
To help mankind, and to remove despair !
Ah ! the meek honours of those aged walls,—
The welcome ringing through resounding halls !
Full many a son hath left such roofs in pain,
And hung in spirit round his home again !

“ Here, then, and, like thy fathers, fill thy part,
Think for thyself,—invigorate thy heart,—
Stand independent,—what thy soul commands,
Follow out boldly, with unspotted hands.
Man is enriched, and by the Lord endowed,—
And, for a cause, inheritance bestowed ;
That the weak worm preferred, more strength may find
To vindicate the truth before mankind ;
And, seeking favours none, nor dreading might,
Firm in his station may uphold the right !”

“ Lady,” then Ireton said, “ we would not ask
Your counsel to our aid ; nor would we task
Your tenderness a labouring state to stay,
Nor wound itself by taking life away.

To give back peace to a distracted realm—
In scourging storms to man the empty helm
With one, who knows the staggering bark to steer
'Mid broken rocks and treacherous quicksands, clear,—
Fearless, to save his charge—powerful to guide
Safe to the port where wealth and peace abide ;
To find this leader must not some give way,
And they, who raised the tempest, penance pay ?
To find this leader, when our perils rise,
Say, must we stand on old authorities ?
And, prating now of rights, and now of crown,
Unhelped of any, see the State go down ?
Or, if that chief, which should our captain be,
Himself hath steered us to the dangerous sea,
May we not—casting forth the gilded slave—
Appease the angry demon of the wave ?
Lady, our thoughts and hearts asunder run,—
Let us not vex you—and the night draws on,—
We will retire to council—you, in sleep,
Shall meet the angels which your slumbers keep !”

He said, and Richard, wishful still to stay,
Seizing his hand, reluctant led away.

Him Robert following, left the maid alone :
Her head she drooped, and, with a gentle moan,
Sinking upon her knees, in holy fear
She met her angels, not in sleep, but prayer.

All night she watched. All night—for neither slept—
The foul debate its weary progress kept ;
Now Ireton's voice triumphant she could hear—
Now Richard's softer answer met her ear ;
Robert for death now keenly seemed to plead,
Now Richard mildly tried to intercede.

So passed the night, and so the soul was pained
Of the pure maiden,—so her watch maintained.

Now the dark Earth, all bathed in western dew,
Sought the glad east, her day-spring to renew ;
Looked for young Day, crowned with his golden beams,
And left the realms of sleep and empty dreams.

Swift sable Night signed all her hosts away,
And Twilight, poised upon his pinion grey,
Hung in the east, and beckoned to the Dawn
To come and gambol on the spangled lawn ;

At length the horizon, freed from envious night,
Was marked by one long trembling line of light.

Then Rachel, as another day begins,
All meekly knelt to pray against its sins ;
She prayed the Lord sweet graces to renew,
And keep her footsteps in temptation true ;
That guilt, like darkness, might retire away,
And graces guide her like the morning ray ;
That, through the day, she might His cause uphold,
And, when night came, in hopefulness feel bold.
But when for others she would grace implore,
Solely for Richard did her heart outpour.
“ Father,” she cried, “ if, pressed in many ways,
His morning prayer he hath forgot to raise,
Do Thou forget him not ! Lead him to be
Thy faithful servant, working under Thee.
If, in his doubtings, yet he hath not prayed
For clear discernment, be the light conveyed ;—
If, in his wavering mind, he hath not leant
On Thee for strength, O let Thy strength be sent ;—
If his late life, or comrades’ guilt, incline
His heart from mercy—Father, keep him Thine !

But, if he yield—and if this one sin more—
Say, is it ended?—Doth the cup run o'er?
Wrath I can bear,—but can the stain depart?—
Can there be pardon?—Father, ease my heart!”

More she had said, but now the wretched men
Broke up their council, and came forth again.
Robert, in loud and hasty order, bade
Horse, and an armed attendance stand arrayed.
Straightway the ready troopers, ranged around,
Spread forth the banner to the trumpet's sound.

Richard approached, and met his sister true,
Her languid hand he took to bid adieu;
Her pale and night-worn face he saw with pain—
“ Rachel! you have not slept!”—“ O when again,
Brother, will innocent and sweet repose,
In child-like sleep, your weary eyelids close?
I have not slept, dear Richard, I have prayed!
But, left of God and thee, I feel afraid!
Go ye not forth to kill? O, in what peace
Wilt thou return again? O, what increase
Of joy will bourgeon from the blood you shed?
What clustering blessings crown your burdened head?

Dark, fatal day !—For innocence in vain
To God cried never—nor unseen her pain !
Here, here I lose thee !—Slow, but certain fate,
Wither's the children's child of them that hate !
Voiceless thy children's empty chamber stands,
Unclasped thy finger by confiding hands ;
Gone the swift racing feet thy halls along,
And happier mansions hear their silver song ;
Thy pure delights, thy joy, thy hopes are fled,
And thy heart fails thee, with thy children dead !
Sure am I thy old line shall ended be,
Others dwell here descended not of thee !
I see thy courage and thy worth forgot,
Thy deeds a bye-word, and thy name a blot !
Tempted to ill, a falling angel thou !
And, Richard, in whose service servant now ?”

Here Ireton made a sign. The trumpets bray—
The pennon waves—they hurry him away.
Intent her shadowy prophecies to shun,
They hasten Richard his sad journey on.

Wild through the air the martial music floats,
Wildly the gables echo back the notes ;

Once more rebellious arms and armour ring,
Flouts the proud flag once more against the King.
Hard by the porch the exhausted maid sunk down,
And found her stay on the cold buttress-stone.
Forth Robert now—not Richard—at the head—
Rides as their chief. He, like a captive led,—
He, like the vanquished taken in the chain,—
She, left like dead, and silent as the slain.

They went their way, and with the crowd they ran-
Passed the harsh vote, and slew the guiltless man !
Fame, amid all her tongues no phrase could find
To amplify the sin before mankind ;
But in mere truth the monstrous history told,
“ These bigots murdered him whom those had sold ! ”
When Richard now again the Hall drew nigh,
And, meeting him, his sister met his eye ;
In mourning weeds he saw the maiden come—
Tears dimmed his welcome, silent was his home.
Nor doffed the dress,—nor raised the cheerless eye,
Till a few months—their passage flitting by—
Bore on their wings—all ceaseless as they moved—
Death ! And she mourned her brother best-beloved !

Chavenage.

PART II.

Chavenage.



PART II.

Now smiles the year—the beams of Titan glow
In warmer signs, and Love's unsparing bow,
Planting in every breast a honied wound,
Spreads his soft kingdom hill and valley round.
Lo! every songster in the leafy grove,
Joyous and plaintive, owned the powers of love,
Long ere the eastern Sun commenced his reign,
Long after Dian ruled her silver wain;
While Philomel, whose heart was deeper smit,
Warm from fresh Italy, alone would sit;
Fast in some mossy thorn would sit alone,
And to the goddess make such dulcet moan,

That her pale steeds more lightly seemed to fly
Through Heaven's blue vault, charmed by the melody,
Till, through the enchanted night, some love-sick swain
Listening, might see Aurora haste again
To catch the witching love-lay as it fell
Where Oberon, within his secret dell,
In courtly guise light bridal dances trod,
His measures tracing on the haunted sod.
In that blest time, when the glad Poet's string
Adds music to the Zephyr's perfumed wing,
And Echo, every laughing vale along,
Leaves the sad plaint which wept her lover's wrong,
And, gathering voice from each enraptured boy,
Still sighs, and speaks of love, but sighs with joy ;
In that soft season every lad is fain
Seek his fair mate to join the dancing train
Around the pole, whose garlands, blooming high,
Exalt May's odours to their parent-sky.

Now many a merry troop to music's sound
In sprightly gambols wove the dance around,
Held happy pastime, and with jocund song
Hailed the glad month, and led their sports along.

Among the hamlets whose young ranks appear
To welcome in the spring-tide of the year,
None with more grace and buxom beauty shone
Than rose the May-day game at Beverstone.
Within that jovial crew none lovelier moved
Than the young bride whom constant Walter loved ;
She—whom his ceaseless suit from Chavenage drew,
He—young Sir Edward's handsome yeoman true.
No softer azure eye—no sweeter smile
From coral lip encouraging their toil,—
No shape more graceful—no light footstep fell
Fleet as the dainty foot of Amabel.
And as she mingled in the dancing throng,
So sweet she lifted up the village song,
With notes so rich, mellifluous, and clear,
That other tones were dissonant to hear.
Gay Walter, blest in his approving bride,
Proud of her beauty, frolicked by her side,
Till, as the noontide glowed, where breezes played
'Mid flowering chestnuts in a leafy glade,
Circled on velvet turf the rural throng
Laid down the easy burden of the song,
While on his sylvan reed the lad essayed
A love-taught tune, and sweetly music made.

Thus, as he travelled through his golden ring,
They paid due honours to the God of Spring.

Suddenly other tones they seem to hear,
And answering melodies engage the ear ;
Now gently trilling o'er the distant plain, '
Now coming gales exulting bear the strain. '
Joyous and clear the blithesome measure ran,
And soft rebounds responding hills began,
Till loud, and louder still, the music grew,
And heralded the minstrel into view.
Lo ! young Sir Edward tripped across the green,
And added graces to a graceful scene.

Tall grown his figure—drawn in youthful grace,
Tender his eye, and kind his smiling face ;
Manhood his ruby lip scarce pencilled on,
While curling locks around his temples shone ;
The beauteous youth was welcome in their sight—
A minstrel skilled—a dancer ready dight ;
And when their mutual courtesies were made,
Again his reed he took, and sweetly played.
Softly the airy music rang around,
And filled the silence with bewitching sound ;

And, if their former bard they praised before,
Young Edward's melody rejoiced them more.

Now Sol descended to the ocean-streams,
And evening glowed with mitigated beams ;
Pale Hesperus lit his silver lamp on high,—
For May's fair glories ne'er forsake the sky,—
And Night, with downy footsteps, passed above,
And chastely curtained all the smiles of love.

Again the choir within the chestnut-glade
Moved to the dance, and merrier grew the shade ;
The husband's pipe their minstrelsy supplied,
Sir Edward's hand led on the smiling bride.
Still, as they danced, seemed Walter's rural art
In light, and lighter tones, alarmed the heart ;
Like the soft progress of some witching spell,
Each rich return in softer cadence fell ;
Each livelier movement higher sense obtained,
And seemed fresh powers immortal music gained.
Still, as they danced, seemed Amabel the fair
Some brilliant fay evoked by music there ;
Each light obedient step spell-bound in grace,
And kindling pleasure beamed upon her face.

Pausing, Sir Edward spoke :—" O, Amabel,
Gentle desires within my bosom dwell ;
And, by the marriage-ring which binds your heart,
Aid my fond scheme—assist a lover's art.
Much have I longed, with pining heart the while,
From a loved maid to gain the approving smile ;
Oft have I sighed, and gentle suit essayed,
Constant in love, to win the modest maid ;
Late have I thought,—unless self-flattery 'twere,—
My plea hath fallen on a more tender ear ;
Perhaps she hath given—my other virtues none—
Some favour to my constancy alone.
Then, Amabel,—for it was thine to live
In that soft heaven which her beauties give,—
Say, wilt thou lead—these marriage-games to tread
In Chavenage courts—and raise her serenade ?
So may she come—the angel of the place—
Forth from the Hall, your bridal-dance to grace :
Perchance once more my wounded heart may plead,—
In blushing silence her acceptance read."

" It is not mine," made Amabel reply,—
" A new-made bride—a lover to deny."

Come, then, my company," she smiled and said,
" On other turfs our measure let us tread ;
Forward we lead the dance to Chavenage-green,
And hold our sports the blossomed thorns between."
Thus, as she spoke, she led the way along,
Their path re-echoed with resounding song,
While many a soft returning roundelay
Welcomed the Spring, and dewy eves of May.

Now when they reached the ancient Manor-place,
No welcome greeted—no familiar face,—
Silent and sad the melancholy Hall,
And darkness brooded 'mid the gables all ;
Gloomy and still arose the pile severe,
Answer was none,—nor seemed their joy to hear.
All hushed as death !—save where the slender beam
Of one sole taper shed a sickly gleam,—
Pale, stealthy figures, ever and anon,
Passed, and were shadowed on the window-stone.
Seemed tender hands the final service paid
To one in sickness, or departure laid,—
Whose passing prayers were whispered through the room
Or stretched in death, and ordering for the tomb.

Yet would Sir Edward, for his love was high,
Beneath the well-known window venture nigh ;
Thus breathed his bosom forth the soft distress,
And thus besought the maiden's tenderness :—

“ Stay, loveliest damsel, stay from sleep,
And listen as I make
My story how thy lovers weep
Through live-long nights awake.

“ The dreamy hopes, the tender pain
Of thy bewitching spell,
The joy to serve thee—but the chain—
O listen as I tell !

“ Say, shall my suit—my fervid prayer—
Unheeded still remain,
And sole return to hope and fear,
A licence to complain ?

“ Is it, 'mid virtues rich and pure,
Thy wisdom, like the rest,
Can see, alas ! but not endure,
The faults within my breast ?

“ Let maiden love cast doubts away,
And while my spots it reads,
My constant heart, my truth survey,
And heal a heart that bleeds !”

Longer the song—but Edward was aware
The portal open,—and the damsel there—
In haste she passed where Amabel would lead
Her frolic dance to Walter's merry reed,
Ever she signed them with her dainty hand,
Beseeching silence from the happy band.

“ Kindly, dear Amabel, withdraw your joy,
Withdraw your pastime, Walter, sportive boy,—
O, all unfitting bridal pleasures here,
For sickness visits us, and Death is near !
Smitten he lies ! Lost all his former power,
Sinking and faint, my brother waits his hour !
But two days past,—the bravest 'mong the brave ;
Two days,—his footsteps tremble in the grave !
Forth as ye go,—although no passing bell
In deep-toned mourning may his passage tell,
Nor summon you to pray with awe-struck hearts,
As to his God a trembling soul departs,
Still let your spirits in your bosoms bend,
And for a brother holy prayers ascend ;
So as he sinks at his Redeemer's feet,
And tells his sins before the Judgment-seat,

May pitying prayers attend the faltering tale,
Plead for free mercy, and with God prevail!"

The train dismissed—with hesitating pace—
Tears in her eyes, and blushes on her face—
Edward she sought,—nor could her heart repress,
Softened in gushing grief, its tenderness.
“It adds to sorrow,” so she said,—“I grieve
Thus to desire our followers to leave;
Fain would I show my Amabel a grace,
And thy poor lad is welcome to the place;
But Edward,”—and she drooped her shapely head,
While tears more fast in silent grief she shed.
Warm on his clasping hand he felt them fall,
And more than diamonds he esteemed them all,—
Her heart was trusting his,—treasure untold,—
Richer than Eastern gems, and drops of gold!

“Rachel, O may I speak?—confide, and know—
Give me thy maiden ear,—in every woe
My heart is thine,—my hand, in every need,
Longs for thy bidding,—prompt thy will to speed.
O, Rachel, take my soul, and let it live
In that pure life, which thou alone canst give,—

Live—bearing forth from thee to all around
The blessed feelings in thy bosom found,
Till cleansed of self, and gaining grace from thee,
My baser tempers may more holy be
Changed into thine!—O take me—show the way
How I may serve thee,—wipe thy tears away.”

“ Alas! Sir Edward, far beyond thy art,
The heavy terrors of my burdened heart,—
Wrath from on high our misery hath brought,
And we are worthless empty things of nought—
Nought save in prayer!—in deeply needed prayer,
For God hath called—and he departs in fear!
Richard, of all my brethren, tenderest, best,
Yields up his spirit—yields it not at rest!
As Death’s dark shadows hang around the tomb,
No beams of hope break through the gathering gloom,
But sins arise,—lift up the voice,—and cry,—
His calls—assurance—special graces die!
Vainly Hugh Peters prays,—exhorts in vain;—
In pain he sinks,—his soul in deeper pain.
Alas! Sir Edward, stay me not,—I go
My trembling form before the Lord to throw;

Helpless we are—and hopeless—save by grace !”
“ Rachel”—and gazed upon her lovely face,—
“ When reft of him,—when in this world alone,
Bethink thee, Rachel, of a soul thine own !”

Their eyes suffused, each to the other turned,
And their hearts following, melting fondness burned :
Nearer he bent, and to his bosom pressed
And kissed the maiden, sinking on his breast,—
Kissed, and begged God’s sweet blessing—filled with joy,
In dreamy love passed on the tender boy ;
Deep in her heart received the feeling dwelt,
And that her spell was cast the maiden felt,—
But for her brother’s peace her bosom yearned,
Self she forgot, and to his side returned.

Entering the lamp-lit room with silent tread,
As a pure prayer from her pure lip was sped,
She heard the preacher stirring up his heart
To seize his promised blessing, and depart ;
She saw her brother shake the failing head,—
She saw misgiving o’er his features spread,—
She heard him murmur,—“ Calls,—wild calls there were,
And there I trusted,—and I left off prayer,—

They preached assurance,—I believed it sent,—
And there I rested,—and did not repent ;—
Repentance—prayer—self-searching cast aside—
New sins I wrought,—and lacquered o'er with pride !
I am not—am not safe !—my former days
Witness against me ! Sins in long arrays !—
Then came the nation's call ! and with a band
Of armed and angry preachers through the land
I marched ; and shouted Gospel, and withstood,
Till I am dying,—stained with guiltless blood !”

Chafed was Hugh Peters,—angry rolled his eye ;
But standing firm on high-wrought rhapsody,
Again he urged the sinner to rely
On foregone feeling,—former extasy.

“ Think'st thou, my brother, that the Lord in vain
Calls His own chosen,—to be lost again ?—
Can the Blest Spirit then descend to thee,
And there ‘ defeated,’ ‘ quenched,’ and ‘ thwarted ’ be ?
Cast, cast aside the false unworthy doubt,
Pass forth in confidence,—thy sins washed out !
Go !—with thy call fulfilled !—Arise and go—
Crime pure as wool,—and scarlet sins as snow !

Lo! as the eagle prunes his wing for flight,
And turns his visage to the dawning light,
Renews his youth, and cleaves his buoyant way
On bounding pinions through the depths of day,
Till to the glorious sun the bird aspires,
And drinks new vigour from eternal fires,
Joyous to see along the beams on high,
Pass to and fro the spirits of the sky;—
So do thou wake, and rouse thee for thy flight,
And set thy face where dawns immortal light,
Fulfil thy gracious call,—with failing breath
Leave, leave behind thee this dark world and death!
No evening o'er thy glorious day shall creep,
No shades shall wrap thy soaring soul in sleep,
But where thou goest brighter glories glow,—
And o'er thy spirit sweeter raptures flow,—
Far into bliss exulting angels guide,
And spheres rejoicing sing from side to side,
Till comes fulfilment,—‘Son accepted mine!’
Thrills through thy bosom,—highest Heaven is thine!”

“O urge thy splendid promises no more,
I cannot follow!—burdened—burdened sore!

Words fill mine ears, but deeds affright mine eyes,—
I see old unrepented sins arise,—
A train too long—too dark—too foul to tell !—
But lo ! they mock me—beckon me to Hell !
Bend, bend the knees !—Forgiveness from the skies !—
Meek shades appear ! Shield, shield me ! Close my eyes !
Tell—tell my deeds !—my burden shall be less !
Speak out, my spirit,—let my soul confess !

“ Well I remind me, after Newberry field,
A case befell, which will not rest concealed ;
But ever since hath stood before my sight
A tender child,—and he is here to-night !
O I must tell it, or I cannot die,
And trust for mercy to my God on high !—
Among our prisoners there stood a man,
Almost a youth, some thirty years his span ;
And at his knee I saw,—silent and mild,—
Mild 'mid his falling tears,—a lovely child ;—
The man a scholar seemed,—'twas said that he
Had preached before the King malignantly ;
And the charge ran that he, and those around,
Breaking their bondage, had been seized and bound :

So orders came to give an hour for prayer,
To take the guilty, and to hang them there.
Now as the battle went, pleased God that day
The heavier burden on His own to lay,
And where the King in pride drew forth his line,
To prove our faith, seemed Jesus' face to shine ;
So that success sat rather 'mid their power,
And we were worsted,—and my soul was sour ;
Thus when the men before me raised their plea,
I turned my horse, and signed them to the tree !
Sudden the child,—his hand upon my foot,—
In tender pressure, urged his holy suit.
Still can I see his full imploring eyes,—
Stifling his words, his sobbing, and his sighs ;
Yet more than words his agony conveyed
All that his heart did burst with,—all he prayed.
' Mercy ! ' with struggling voice he strove to say,—
' Mercy !—Take not my father's life away !
I have no mother,—but he is to me
Father and mother, and we still are three !
Her dearest face, all in the dark, cold grave,
We laid together,—and since then I have
All her sweet love from him !—At night we rest
On the same bed,—at morn by him I'm drest ;

He feeds me—tends me—guards me—still and e'er
Doubly he loves me—loves for him and her !
Betwixt his knees I read,—and there I pray,—
And hear how my sweet mother shaped her way ;
And when my tasks are ended, then we go
Strolling 'mid hills,—along the vallies low,
And all the way he keeps me out of harm,
And when I tire, I rest upon his arm ;
And then he loves to sit beside the stream,
And talk about her till we almost dream,
Till she doth almost come,—it seems to me,—
And rest beside us,—so that we be three !
Then with his tears his eyes begin to swell,
And he will kiss me more than I can tell.
O mercy ! mercy !—do not take his blood !
My father fights not !—he is very good !
O do not spoil it all,—nor take away
All that we do, and love by night and day !
But let us live,—my mother's house within,—
Where neither ever thought or did a sin !'
The Provost-Marshall wept,—and looked to see
On my hard face some sign of clemency ;
I coldly moved, and turned my horse's head,—
The man unpardoned to his death was led !

“ I saw the child no more ;—alas ! they say
That my spur tore him as I turned away !
They told me that he rushed away from me,
Sought his accustomed place—his father’s knee ;
Following bewildered, till the wretched band
Beneath the fatal tree arrive and stand.
They say the father bent his knees and prayed,—
But for his child was almost all he said,
And with such fervour prayed he, and so deep,
That God would be a Father, and would keep—
Keep him, and bless him !—that ere he had done,
He sunk—and swooned,—almost already gone !
The boy kissed wildly his pale father’s face,
And he revived, and took his last embrace,—
Then rose and blessed him !—‘ Ever, darling son,
Find God in prayer,—and lean on Him alone !
Do nothing wrong,—and God’s right hand divine
Shall lead thee better—happier far than mine,—
More strong, more true, more wise,—the Lord on high—
More tender far,—more provident than I !
And now I go !—O should I go to be
The guardian angel, set to watch for thee,
Ever by day thy footsteps will I keep,
And in soft dreams will comfort thee asleep !

Will lead thy tender soul, all charmed in grace,
Through peaceful virtues, down thy gentle race !
Now close thine eyes, nor look as I depart,—
It is too dreadful for thy tender heart !’

“ The boy sat down, close at that sad tree-foot,
And crouched his form in its high-swelling root,
And being told that he was not to see,
Bent his young head, all sobbing on his knee.
Fast through his slender fingers fell like rain
Tears pure as silver,—tears without a stain,—
Rushed through the purple vein the throbbing pulse,
And racking sobs his bursting heart convulse ;
Till hearing, as he sat, nor sigh, nor word,—
For utterance all was strangled in the cord,—
Hope whispered, ‘ Is he spared ? ’—he looked to see,—
And saw him writhing in his agony !

“ Back fell the child,—silent, without a word,
He passed away,—and but a sigh was heard,—
The father’s shade had beckoned to the son,
And,—as their wont,—together they are gone !—
Sir, is there pardon ? ”——“ Pardon !—is there crime ? ”
“ Crime ! O, Sir, yes.—Alas ! there was a time

When I believed I had a call from Heaven,
And thought assurance with that call was given.
My heart was lifted up whene'er I knelt,
Enthusiastic warmth my bosom felt ;
Deeming that Christ had snatched me from the fire,
A brand fore-doomed to escape eternal ire,
Chosen I felt,—elect,—in company
My spirit seemed to live with saints on high."

" But these were holy thoughts—convictions true,—
Held then the saints communion with you !
This was the Comforter, within your breast,
Scourging all fear away, and bringing rest,—
Freedom from sin,—the promise of the Lord,—
The strength,—the consolation of the word ;—
These the experiences that usher in
Perfect assurance from the pains of sin !
O let thy soul accept thy blessed lot !
The Lord hath sent these graces !" —

" Were they not
Temptations rather,—fantasy,—a snare ?
What were the fruits ?—Banished all doubt and fear !
With these self-searching went,—my careful walk,—
I was elated,—my religion—talk !

My soul no longer, like the weaned child,
Went through her conflicts fearfully and mild;
But blindly boasting that I was in God,
Reached forth my hand in pride, and seized the rod;
Claimed to drag Christ along my bloody path,
Stamped his mild warrant upon death and wrath:—
These were the fruits!—At last my voice was lent
To shed pure blood indeed!—Let me repent!”

“Repent! dear brother,” Rachel softly said;
“Yes! gracious word!—Thou shalt be comforted!
Come, I will kneel, and let your soul bow down;
Together we will seek to Jesus’ throne!
Leave with a cleansed breast,—repent,—begin!
Pour out the spirit,—leave no spot within!
Think not on calls!—Let your poor burdened soul
Kneel at the Cross, and there confess the whole.
Ruthless in war, puffed up, seduced, enticed,
Lay down assurance,—nothing plead but Christ!
Come, dearest brother, enter Heaven in prayer,
The straightest, surest, sweetest pathway there!
Lo! I begin:—‘O, Father, deign to hear
Weak trembling words like mine! Incline thine ear

To one unfit before thy face to pray!
But we are smitten!—Cast him not away!
Spare for Christ's sake!—Let him in pardon live!
He was misled,—in pity, Christ, forgive!”

“ Madam,” the Preacher stayed her, “ you perplex:
Fie! fie!—These prayers are errors, and they vex!”

“ O, no! they vex me not, Rachel, dear soul,
Thou hast the right, I must confess the whole.
But how begin? Can I make clean the breast?
Will the Lord tarry for my sins confest?
Crimes rise like spectres,—memory surveys
My secret youthful sins,—my early days;
Sins that I loved reproach me from afar,
Sins of my youth before these times of war!
Then what a burden since I took the sword!—
I cried, ‘ Destroy,’—but, ‘ Suffer,’ said the Word;
And I o’erruled the word, and did destroy,
Saw death with triumph—violence with joy.
O what a legion haunts me!—Jesus, spare!—
Grant,—grant but time to cleanse me!—Hear my prayer!
Let me begin!—But where shall I begin?—
Help! help!—I’ll struggle with my greatest sin!

The sin the last,—the greatest of my life,—
The sin that closed my course of bigot-strife!
Let me begin. When for the King, too true,
Rachel, you spoke, my spirit went with you,—
And oft before!—Conscience, when first I armed,
Still asked, ‘Where is the danger?—Who is harmed?
What tyranny insults? what injured right?
The King hath yielded largely,—wherefore fight?’

“ Silent I often turned aside to pray,
Called on the Lord—implored to see my way:
‘Is it God’s cause?—His weapons do I wield?
Christ do I follow through the bloody field?’
But crafty men—hard-hearted—men in need—
World-seeking zealots, nursed in Satan’s creed,
Scorn a quick conscience!—Some would laugh away
My doubts and questions,—some would kneel and pray:
Oft from God’s word they spake, and truth perplexed,
And strangled Christian feeling in a text.
I feared man more than God!—and so the bold
Trampled on grace!—My spirit was controlled.
Too true thy righteous words!—no peace with me!—
And oft in tears those better times I see,

When, by our father led, in early days
On him I rested,—loved his holy ways!—
In tears I think,—how, till I walked alone,
Our thoughts, our deeds, our hopefulness were one!
His strength withdrawn,—how palsied is my heart!
How mercy, constancy, and awe depart!—
How blasted all the promise,—and the whole
Rich teeming harvest of the youthful soul!
Because I feared the world!—A blight then ran
O'er the whole heart,—and barren stood the man!

“ Yet shall the soul cast forth her innocence
Long ere the Spirit cries, ‘ Let us go hence!’
Should the false fleshly heart to this world lean,—
Love it,—grow careless,—prayerless,—then unclean;
Still, though expelled, the spirit loves to stay,—
Hang round the breast it dwelt in, and delay;—
Will soften now,—remonstrate,—or control,—
Will now rebuke,—will now allure the soul;—
Scarce can the father leave a son to die,
So rich is God!—‘ forsaking utterly!’

“ Then whether, in the boundless loves of Heaven,
Some angel strives I yet may be forgiven;

And therefore brings before my sorrowing sight
Sins I had closely hidden from the light;—
Or whether, sinking with her burdens sore,
The measure of my trespass running o'er,
My soul, before her time, foretastes her doom,
And vengeful spectres haunt me from the tomb;—
Whate'er God's purpose with me,—shapes appear,
Sign round my head, and whisper in my ear,
Sinking where spread the shadows of the room,
Or mocking now, or beckoning from the gloom!

“ Vainly in slumber would I hush despair,—
Dreaming oblivion still remembers there!
There do I meet more vividly my deeds,
More plainly there my injured victim bleeds!
In sleep I tremble,—and my dread repose
Renews my terrors, and calls back my woes!
E'en now,—but my poor brain is sore astray,—
And whether dreams, or real figures they,—
Methought I heard our slaughtered Monarch speak,
Tender in faith, in keenest passion meek!
Seemed that the children three whom we had ta'en
From the King's household when the King was slain,

Seated in some stone-vault I could descry,
Each, hand in hand, in silent misery.
Methought I saw, along the cold grey wall,
The evening beams in waning splendour fall ;
The hours I traced, as a pale glory cast
From some heraldic pane, in shadows past.

“ Oft did Elizabeth,—our eldest prey,—
Her brothers kiss as daylight wore away ;—
Loving,—and shrinking in the gloomy cell,
Each nestled closer as the evening fell,
Till, as the darkness veiled these tremblers in,
And from all eyes, but One, concealed our sin,
Seemed the heart-broken maid arose to say,—
‘ ’Tis night, my brothers,—’tis the time to pray.’—
Meekly, and hand in hand, the three knelt down,
And, joined in silver tones, their prayer was one ;
But fear and grief their memories betrayed,
And, as in happier times, their prayer they made.
‘ O bless,’ they said, ‘ our father dear,’—and straight
They fell to earth, remembered of his fate !—
To earth the orphans fell, and sobs alone
Worded their prayer,—but so it reached the Throne !

Their broken prayer 'mid sobs they would renew,
' Bless—bless our mother!'—but their sorrows grew
Too great for utterance,—in a close embrace,
They sought the sorry pallet of the place ;
And then, though hushed by night and sleep to rest,
Still rose the heavy sob,—still heaved the breast !

“ But soon I saw how safe within his hands
Rest they,—who rest on God !—The scene expands ;—
Robed in the beams of Heaven, arrayed in light
More clear than morning sun dispelling night,
More gentle, and more peaceful in his mien,
Than mother o'er her sleeping babe is seen,
One came,—and, leaning o'er each sobbing breast,
Soothed by his presence every grief to rest ;
Soothed as some peaceful spirit passing by,—
The throbbing anguish, and the long-drawn sigh !
Each child, though sleeping, owned the heaven-sent
charm,—
Dreamt in sweet smiles,—dismissed the fear of harm ;
From each young face the lines of grief retire,
For by his offspring stands their royal Sire !
Tenderly gazed he on his captive race,
In tenderest love smiled back each sleeping face ;

A silent blessing seemed to leave his breast,
And blessed peace their dreaming smiles exprest.
I feared his sight!—but no!—the Saints are bent
To mourn our sins,—t' avert our punishment.
I saw no wrath when turned on me his eye,—
No frantic father there,—no frenzy high!
Far other feelings on his face I scan,—
I stood unheeded,—grace subdued the man!
Lo! his full forehead towards the Heaven he turned,
While filled with thankfulness his visage burned;—
His pleading eye grew brilliant, as with God,
And, entering Heaven, on earth he left his load,—
Breathed soft his quivering lip the grateful prayer,
Emptied his soul,—and here left all his care!

“ ‘ Called by sweet Providence!—God of my birth!—
Stay of my spirit!—called from this poor earth,—
From false and cruel injuries called away!
Released from toil ere ended half my day!—
Borne to my haven by that whirlwind's rage,
And spared my labours in a wicked age!
O let me thank Thee for my quick release,
And bless the love that hastened on my peace!

O let me bless Thee that the world was hard,
And I from pomps and pleasures soon debarred,
That grief from proud temptations set me free,
And fiery trials turned my soul to Thee !

“ ‘ So, if the path my children tread the same,
More let me thank Thee,—more thy praise proclaim !
And if more innocent, the prize is given
Sooner !—If purer, sooner called to Heaven,
O let me thank Thee with a deeper joy,
And hail the fading girl,—the drooping boy,—
And bless the passage, which so early brings
My favoured lineage to the King of kings !
I laid down life, and found a home prepared ;
O with my children be it quickly shared !
Their sorrows are not long !—Grief—want combine
To lead them out of earth !—They soon may pine !
Treading their thorny path with tender feet,
The more the pain, the sooner shall we meet !
O, Suffering has her mercies, and the rod
Guides to the hand that bears it !—Gracious God !
He gave my passage through their bloody court ;
Is theirs the same ?—Patience ! the pang is short !’

“ He passed !—and softer slept each care-worn child ;
The martyr-spirit looked to Heaven and smiled.
Rachel, the heart-strings of a gentle King
With such keen racking my hard hand did wring,—
With such keen anguish sent his soul away,—
Comfort me, Preacher !—Lead me on to pray ! ”

“ Rest, thee,” said Peters,—“ calm thy tortured brow,
Beat down these visions,—more than pardoned thou !
Elect to walk before God’s holy face,
Far more than pardoned !—Vessel filled with grace !
Foreseen for glory !—Destined by your call !
Long since accepted, and assured from fall !
Rest on God’s high inestimable gift,
Silence these cries—these papal prayers for shrift.

“ Be it not mine, while labouring with disease,
To urge you harshly,—but these fears displease,—
They cloud with trembling doubts the beams of grace,
They say that sin can glorious calls efface !
To bend the soul, to pray, repent, and weep,
These be the fruitless toils of outcast sheep ;
But the elect have certainty of peace,
Triumph on earth, and glory in release !

“ O Lord, inscrutable, why all this fear ?
Why,—why so hidden from thy chosen here ?
Where is the Comforter ?—Why this delay ?—
Why darkling thus a soul called into day ?
Art Thou not pledged ? Is not Thy promise given ?
Is he not sealed to enter into Heaven ?
As Jacob wrestled with the Lord of yore,
Lo ! I will wrestle——”

“ Wrestle thou no more !”

Shuddering, the sick man said,—“ Lift me in prayer ;
If I must fall from Heaven, still raise me there !
Deaden repentance not !—Death comes apace ;
I cry for mercy,—Saviour, show thy face !”

“ Sir,” he replied, “ your faulty words imply
That covenanted souls in sin may die.
You shake Election,—and your fears proclaim,
God’s call a vision, and an empty name !
Sir, unto God’s high grace you do despise,—
I cannot witness it ! God give you light !
But this is dark offence !—Lo ! e’en as Paul
His raiment shook, the Jews blaspheming all,—
So shake I mine against you !—and I find
Paul’s words are sent, and rush upon my mind,—

‘ Thy blood shall be upon thee,—I am clean !’
I close my mission !”—and he left the scene.

The sick man shrunk,—joined his thin hands to pray,
Gazed dimly after him, and scarce could say,
“ Jesu forbid !—Sister,—I pass,—save thee,
Entering unguided on eternity !
No one to help me left,—save thy true heart,—
O raise thy voice to God as I depart !
Alone I am !—Bloody the path I’ve trod !”

“ Brother, when all have left us, there is God !
And, when alone, my heart hath often felt
Most blessed company as I have knelt !
But not alone ! Because, when need is sore,
Christ nearer stands, and waits for us the more !
As a fond father, with endearments mild,
Hastens to raise his tottering, falling child,
And, folding in his bosom, face to face,
Lifts him from earth in a prolonged embrace ;—
So will the Lord, dear Richard, meet his child,
And shield him in his bosom reconciled ;
And, when the heart hath gone before in prayer,
Lift him repentant, and his peace prepare ;

Raising him from the earth, will dry the tear
That weeps his fall, and bid it disappear.
Rise, then, and leave despair ;—with child-like heart
All faltering come, and do the infant's part ;
The pure—the true—the hoping—wanting cry,
Which reaches to the ear of God on high,
And sweeter there than, echoing through the sky,
The rich returns of angels' melody !

“ O Thou, that from thy mercy-seat above
Viewest this world with more than father's love,
With more than longing father's keen desire
Each erring soul most fondly dost require,
Who, from thy dwelling-place of purest bliss,
Still pitiest—seekest those that walk amiss !
Thou, who didst sinless bear the sinner's part,
Bringing thy sons more than a Father's heart ;
Who, while we scorned,—offended,—cast aside,—
Stood steeped in guilt, and obstinate in pride,
Didst come disowned !—Rejected,—came to pay
The price in blood, for us, self cast-away ;—
And, gracious Maker of a world betrayed,
Didst yield thy life,—and paying,—overpaid !—

Opening again the gate to Heaven and Thee,
And, of free mercy, set thy children free !
O Father, God of mercy, must we fear
Of all this mercy none can visit here ?
O, must we hang the head, and turn away,
And wring the hand, and lose eternal day ?
Is pardon forfeited ? Is pity cold ?
Is the stain deeper than thou canst behold ?
Great though his sins, O Lord,—though I, too true,
A sinner,—powerless,—worthless in thy view !—
Still, still have mercy,—and a prayer preferred,
Though from a sinner,—still let prayer be heard !

“ O, could I see some sign !—Could I believe,
This struggle ended, mercy would receive !
Might he in Heaven's lowest mansions find
His safe abode,—thine anger cast behind,—
And,—if unmeet with purer souls to dwell,—
In outer courts escape the pains of hell !
Resting redeemed, and have the bliss to be
A soul for ever blessed in serving Thee !
There might we dwell, saved 'mid the least above,
Thankful for evermore, fulfilled with love ;

Fast by the golden gates obedient still
To bear the mandates of Thy gracious will,
And carry forth, to all the orbs in space,
Thy mercy and Thy wisdom ! grace on grace !
Thy gifts perpetual,—and our duty high,
Our joy perpetual,—bearing through the sky
More than prayer cries for,—fuller in its kind,
And richer good than entereth in the mind !
O, let the boundless tides of mercy rise,
And wash his stains for ever from thine eyes ;
Cleanse in those floods of life, where no decrease,
And bear him from his downfalls into peace !
O, could I see some sign”——a gentle sigh
Her prayer arrested, and she looked more nigh,—
She saw him all entranced,—gazing above,—
While his lips, whispering, trembled as in love !
No words for earth those praying lips did say,
He spake with Jesus,—and was on his way !
His eye saw not this world, heard not his ear,
For they were bent on Heaven, and were not here !
Of his poor sister’s prayer perchance no word
Had cheered him.—Seemed a Holier Ear had heard ;
For, while his silent conference he held,
In his full eye soft tears of rapture swelled,

And gently flowed, as if the gushing heart
Burst with his pardon, ere he could depart,
And o'er his pleading lip a smile was spread
As though the body tasted grace—ere dead,—
As though the soul, before it passed away,
Left God's forgiveness stamped upon the clay.

L'Envoi.

All malcontent, Hugh Peters went his way,
And 'mong his flock it was his wont to say,
With many a solemn sigh and deep "alas!"
That, at the moment the sick man did pass,
"Lo! from the earth I lifted up mine eyes,
And saw the royal coach with great surprise,
The shield, the burnishing, the crown the same,
Proud, pompous, wicked thing!—and on it came.—
Black were its horses,—and their eyes were fire,
Methought the sinner's soul it might require.
It reached the door!—In all its pride it stayed!—
I saw within it glide his shrinking shade;—
Stunned with despair the pageant bore him off,
While half-seen demons flit around and scoff!

But, as it turned to bear him from the place,
Yet more I saw,—and all was out of grace !
I looked to see who drave the sinful thing,
And lo ! aloft there sat the headless King !
Bright shone his star,—sin's gauds are ever bright,—
Clear the vain garter gleamed upon my sight,—
And ' *Honi soit qui mal y pense* ' there shone
So keen,—it pained my eyes to look upon ;—
His jewelled sword was there,—his ermined pride,—
As though the sceptred Monarch did preside,—
But, when the phantom to the gateway came,
The vision vanished in sulphureous flame !”

So spake Hugh Peters,—and the tale was spread
By every ancient melancholy maid ;
And still each ancient maid, in grave reproach,
Whispers, “ The Stephens' leave us in the coach !”
Strong in their wine,—magnificent in woe,—
Their nurses see them in the pageant go !
And,—hearing medicines to the sick 'Squire came,—
Boys hail the omen, and desire the flame !
These things the poet doubts not,—I but stay
The ending moral of my tale to say :

The males of Stephens' line have perished all,
And Rachel's children hold the ancient hall ;
Sir Edward wedded with the godly maid,
And Fate proceeded as the vision said.

Hawkesbury Manor.

“ And if I cannot live
My Violante’s, I’ll die her sacrifice.
Good Sir, no more——”

THE GAMESTER.



INTRODUCTION.

THE Manor-house of Hawkesbury was formerly the seat of the noble family of Jenkinson, Earls of Liverpool and Baronets. A melancholy accident is said to have occurred there something more than a century ago, in consequence of which the family deserted it, and it has subsequently been taken down. Sir Robert Jenkinson, then in possession of Hawkesbury, learnt that his favourite daughter had admitted the addresses of Mr. Paston, lord of the adjoining parish of Horton, who was a strict communicant in the Church of Rome, and a warm adherent of the royal line of Stuart, while Sir Robert was a firm supporter of the House of Hanover, and a determined Protestant: he therefore took the earliest occasion, when Mr. Paston visited at Hawkesbury, of dismissing him as a suitor,

and forbidding him his house. The young lover, in leaving the place, cast a look towards the building and perceived the lady at an upper window ; he kissed his hand as a parting salute ; when she, leaning forward to return it, fell, together with a portion of the window, which was extremely ancient, into the court-yard below, and perished in the sight of her father, who was almost a witness of the catastrophe.

In this Ballad the writer has attempted to pourtray the probable feelings of the parties at that period.

Hawkesbury Manor.

O HAWKESBURY MANOR, Hawkesbury Manor,
Why so empty stand thy halls ?
Why in dampness droops thy banner,
Rust the weapons on thy walls ?

Echo once, in playful answers,
Mocked, thy shadowy roofs along,
The tripping step of sportive dancers
As they mixed the maze among.

Echo once, when lads light-hearted
Raised in turn the mellow strain,
Trilling back, ere it departed,
Softer gave the tones again.

Silent now, no minstrels vying
Challenge Echo to reply ;
Nought, save heavy night-gales sighing,
Gains the answer of a sigh.

Hawkesbury Manor, Hawkesbury Manor,
Why so empty stand thy halls ?
Why in dampness droops thy banner ?
Rust the weapons on thy walls ?

“ Tell me, Catharine, tell me truly,
Who the youth that rides the vale ?
Tell me why, at night-fall duly,
Still thou walk'st the moonlight pale ?

“ Who, within the arbour seated,
Lists with thee the nightingale ;
Warm his plaintive suit repeated,
Soft,—as doth the bird bewail ?

“ Gentle child,—all wounded newly,—
Trust to me the tender tale ;
Tell me, Catharine, tell me truly,
Who the youth that rides the vale ?

“ Must my pain,—long silent,—hidden,
Deep within my bleeding breast,
By my fondest mother bidden—
Must the secret be confessed ?

“ Love,—can I say it ? long has pained me,
Still concealed by maiden shame !
Long a doubtful fear restrained me :
For our worship,—not the same !

“ Oft my trembling soul would falter,
Oft to speak my mind would move,
But,—cleaving to the Roman altar,
Clement Paston—has my love !” ;

“ Image worship !—holy water !—
Bauble relics !—Latin mass !—
Pity ! pity ! Gentle daughter,
Break thy dream, and let it pass !

“ Never, Catharine, can thy father
Join your hands, and bless the hour ;
In bitterest tears his heart would rather
On thy coffin drop the flower !”

Who is this, with strength diminished,
Reverend in his silver hairs,
Waiting till his course is finished,
Weary of a world of cares ?

Catharine, wherefore shun the greeting,
And the kiss thou dost desire ?
Why avoid the saint-like meeting
Of thy grave and tender sire ?

“ Daughter, kneel !—but, ere my blessing,
Speak,—and the sad truth impart,—
Is yon Papist Boy addressing
Craft and flattery to thy heart ? ”

“ Father, I cannot deceive thee—
But I am no longer thine !
I am his !—Forgive, forgive me !
And his soul is one with mine.

“ Yesternight the promise past me,
'Neath that Eye which never sleeps :
Do not from thy blessing cast me—
But the word hath left my lips !

“ Frown not, father, nor reject me !
From my solemn compact driven,
All thy love could not protect me,
For we spake with Christ in Heaven ! ”

“ Catharine, Catharine, rise, and leave me, —
God I fear ! — His word is true ! —
Some hastened death will soon receive thee, —
I have not mine honour due.

“ My wrath is great ! — nor stay, — nor tarry ! —
Darkly angered at thy word, —
Leave, — while my frail heart I carry,
Sorely burdened, to the Lord !

“ Give thy hand ! — the gift shall sever
Sire and child, beyond redress ;
Never will I own thee, — never
Hail thy wedlock ! — never bless !

“ Join a Church where works are merit !
Where prayer is offered to the dead !
Join a Church which mocks the Spirit,
And adores the priest instead !

“ Go ! where Stuart kings, respected,
Still they plot to bring again ;
Outcast race, and twice rejected,—
Outcast thou,—with them remain !

“ Leave ! and to thy chamber take thee,
Till thy face I seek to see ;
Pray that grace may not forsake me,—
Pray that thou may'st honour me !”

Who appears, in habits courtly,
Stately followers, pomp and din ?
Who demands his audience shortly
With the aged knight within ?

From the lofty lattice bending
Why doth Catharine gaze with pain ?
Doth she love the youth descending ?
Wishful doth she view the train ?

“ Clement Paston ! Hast already
Come to tell me of thy guile ?
Is thy lust too hot, and heady,
To await a little while ?

“ Wait,—and soon with spirit broken

Weak and old I pass away ;—

Keep till then thy marriage token,

Kiss her then,—and then betray !

“ Take her to your house of treason,—

Teach her to your idols pray,—

Bid her worship out of reason,—

Out of law your King obey !

“ But ne’er by me shall she be given

To thee or thine, while I survive ;

She came from Heaven,—and fit for Heaven

She shall abide !—So may I thrive !

“ The Lord bestowed !—with deepest pleasure

I received her at her birth ;—

In love,—in prayer,—all out of measure,—

I’ve preserved her pure on earth.

“ She is my crown !—she is my glory !

And when with my God I deal,

And tell my life,—dark, sinful story,—

I look on her, and comfort feel !

“ Ne’er by me shall she be given
To thee or thine !—so may I thrive !
She came from Heaven,—and fit for Heaven,
Unstained by thee, while I survive !

“ Then haste thee hence, and vex no longer,—
I am dangerous !—leave me !—go !
A wrathful father’s arm is stronger
Than I wish a boy to know !”

“ Sir Knight, I go,—and much in sorrow,
Not in anger, nor in fear ;—
The whole is new,—perhaps to-morrow
I may stand more welcome here.”

“ Never, Paston !”—“ Sir, remember,
In God’s hand our hearts remain !
He will mould them ! Every temper
He will cherish or restrain !

“ O let Christ’s Gospel not divide us,—
Mutual love is there decreed ;
Nor with unthinking men deride us,
If more ample is my creed.

“ I kneel but where thy fathers, kneeling,
Went before the Lord in prayer ;
And in their prayers we still are feeling
Weary feet may travel there.

“ You say I am too much believing,
That I utter prayers in vain,
And fondly deem my priest deceiving
Brings me back my God again.

“ O, rather think how Sin, enfolding,
Oft wraps the young within her snare,
And leads them on, no faith upholding,
To disbelief and dark despair !

“ And if I think that saints above us
All our earthly trials know,
And watching, as they deeply love us,
Strive for us who sin below ;

“ Still deem not arguments can sully
Creeds which thus surround the throne ;
But rather people Heaven too fully,
Than bid our frailties walk alone.

“ If I an injured race am aiding,
And rightful Monarchs would bring in,—
Say, is my loyalty degrading?
Is my constancy a sin?

“ The knightly honours which you blazon,
Their royal hands bestowed of yore;
Why am I wrong, if, for that reason,
Them I love, and thee the more?

“ Once, in chivalric pride arising,
Kings looked to God, and dared their fate,
And Truth before existence prizing,
In council and in arms were great.

“ Then a clear line ruled this high nation,
Strong hearts behind the lion shield;
Nor blenched from what became their station,
Or on the scaffold, or the field!

“ Fit they their palaces to enter,
Who, conscience-governed, bore the rod;
Nor feared we then a life to venture,
When royal footsteps led to God.

“ But now, with fettered steps, and wending
As their subjects point the way,
Your German kings, in conscience bending,
Take the order, and obey.

“ Go, crown them ! style them God’s anointed !
Pledge them by His Blood to serve
Your novel Church !—But, man-appointed,—
Pressed by man,—your monarchs swerve !

“ Not with hand, but heart observant,—
Not the body, but the soul,—
I disown the gilded servant,
Toiling in his mob-control !”

“ Paston, romance may garnish error,
But her nature will remain ;
She springs in weakness, lives in terror,
And her final end is pain.

“ Thy words are heard from every scoffer,—
Empty visions in the air :
Satan a fulsome dream will offer,
While we sleep within his snare,

“ But, in God’s grace my child still staying
From his enchantments shall be free ;
And never praying, nor obeying,
Or in Church or State with thee.

“ ‘Then go !—nor while I live returning ;
May a better mind be sent !’
The young man’s face like fire is burning,
He bowed his head,—he sighed,—and went.

“ Rise, Sir Robert !—hasten, hasten !”
In the court-yard shrieks and cries !
Hark ! the piercing voice of Paston,
Hear his word,—“ She dies ! she dies !

“ As my horses from the stable
Hastily they bring to hand,
My eye,—turned upward to yon gable,—
Saw the window open stand.”

“ My daughter’s chamber !”—“ There I saw her,
Motionless. I made salute :
She answered not,—nor did withdraw her ;
I wafted kisses,—she was mute.

“ Retiring,—for thy sentence drave me,—
Still my eye was fixed above ;—
When vanishing,—she leant, and gave me
A parting signal of her love !

“ She leant,—but ancient is the building,—
Still she leant,—and still would greet :
Sudden, the fragile oriel yielding,
Cast the angel at our feet ! ”

In tears, where her forefathers sleeping,
Her smitten charms they bury there ;—
The youth, in sables sorely weeping,
Distant breathed the silent prayer.

Then left this idle world, and gave him
To the cell, where troubles cease,—
Prayed that the Church, through Christ, might save him,
And join their souls again in peace.

Sir Robert, 'neath his burden bending,
Speechless languished night and day ;
Nor spake, till weary life was ending,—
“ Catharine calls—I go my way ! ”

His body rested ; but his shadow
Speechless often paced the Hall,
Restless walked the moonlight meadow,
Gazed upon the gable tall.

Never more his children staid there,—
Little cared they for their own ;
Known only as their graves they made there,
Remembered only on the stone !

Squire Matthew.

“ I’ve heard myself proclaimed ;
And, by the happy hollow of a tree,
Escaped the hunt.”

KING LEAR.

THE events narrated in the following Tale took place in a family seated on the Cotswold Range :
temp. Charles II.

Squire Matthew,

Now it was told at the Market Place,
And the word it soon came down,
That good King Charles was come back again,
To battle for his crown ;

To battle for his royal crown,
His sceptre, and his right ;
And Cromwell and his rebel rogues
To banish into flight.

Now when Squire Matthew heard the same,
He blessed himself that hour,
And went unto his loyal dame,
Who sat within her bower

Who sat within her silent bower,
To work white, blue, and red,
In silken tap'stry, leaf and flower,
For chamber, state, and bed.

“ Now listen, Dame, now list to me,
With news I thee accost ;
Here comes King Charles in his majesty,
And his kingdom is not lost.

“ Oh, I must call my merry men all,
And in the saddle ride ;
O'er hill and dale I must prevail,
And through the country side.

“ For I must fight another field,
And strike another blow :
My proud old spirit cannot yield
To rebels base and low.”

“ Alas !” then spake his loyal dame,
“ Alas !” she said, and wept,—
“ The ending stakes of a losing game
Must be no longer kept.

“ Oh, reckon up the lands they’ve ta’en,
The gold and silver rent,
And two poor manors alone remain
That are not gone and spent !

“ It is not that I fear to toil,
Or labour for my bread ;
But when I think on my children all,
My heart is sore adread.

“ Oh, were we now as once we were,
Both loving, young, and free,
When to meet me at eve was still your prayer,
Beneath the green-wood tree ;

“ Oh, then I could follow you forth to the war,
And follow you forth to the fight ;
I would listen anear, and listen afar,
To keep your rest from fright.

“ I would burnish your armour, and buckle it on,
To shield your body from harm ;
And when the terrible toil was done,
Would spread your couch so warm.

“ I would spread your couch, and watch your sleep,
And then kneel down and pray ;
And if my eyes by night might weep,
I would smile when you woke at day.

“ And if you must fly, I would follow along,
And to labour for you I'd be fain,
Till the joy of the work should burst out in a song,
And drive away every pain.

“ And if in the strife you met your doom,
E'en death would not divide ;
I should feel that at last my time was come,
And stretch me down by your side.

“ But we are weak, and no longer strong,
And treading the vale of years ;
Though our rightful King hath many a wrong,
We have no help but our prayers.”

“ Good lack ! good lack ! ” quoth Squire Matthew,
“ Good lack for your heavy cheer,
When the happiest tidings I tell to you
Which have happened the live-long year !

“ And think not of the gold they’ve ta’en,
Nor reckon our fair broad lands ;
For care will not bring them back again,
From out their thieving hands.

“ But lo ! another day hath dawned,
And another sun hath risen,
And justice is come back again
To light us under Heaven.

“ And the pure Martyr’s shriven soul
Hangs o’er the host in wrath ;
Sent forth to scourge rebellion foul
For ever from his path.

“ Oh ! it were shame, and sin to boot,
For one of gentle blood
To follow with unwilling foot
The son of Charles the Good ;

“ To blench away from harm or scathe,
Or think upon the stake :
’Tis honour, right, and holy faith,—
I’ll battle for their sake !

“ Oh ! I could talk upon the theme
Till the hour-glass sand ran by,—
Till a woman’s my ceaseless tongue would seem,
A woman’s my watery eye.

“ But I must arise, to the field away,
Or sit down, ashamed to live ;—
Then kiss me, good Dame, I no longer stay
Than a blessing to take and to give.

“ And the cause I’ll leave, and bow me down
To the hand of the Lord on high ;
And if on our struggle once more He frown,
’Tis time that we all should die.

“ Son Wynniard, thou shalt ride with me,
And eke, son George, shalt thou ;
And the first time ye the King shall see
Shall be crowned in a laurel bough.”

Squire Matthew he mounted his snow-white steed,
And his pennon floated free ;
And his own son George, and Sir John Wynniard,
They rode out three by three.

And fifty young yeomen mounted and rode
Another field to see,
For they loved to behold the old banner abroad ;
And they rode out three by three.

The flags were spread, and the trumpets brayed,
And the arms and the armour shone ;
“ Now strike up the tune,” Squire Matthew said,
“ The King shall enjoy his own !”

The music awoke with a martial clang,
While they pledged it in solemn tone ;
Then the young men sang, and the echoes rang,
“ The King shall enjoy his own !”

They passed down into the narrow vale,—
They passed out over the hill ;
And the echo took up the loyal tale,
And the silent air did fill.

They passed from out the narrow vale,
They passed from the hills among,
And fainter and fainter on the gale
Sank down the loyal song.

When the last short beam on their arms did gleam,
When the last faint sound was heard,—
Then his weeping dame to her chamber came,
And opened the sacred Word.

For comfort she longed, and for trust she yearned,
So her chamber she sought retired;
She read on the Book, and from earth she turned,
And she prayed to the Lord inspired.

“ O Father, who seest in every part,
In Thy mercy deign to see
The fears and the sorrows that shake my heart,
And in pity comfort me!

“ Oh, if it be Thy holy will
Still farther to chastise,
And if Thine own anointed still
Must fail in his emprise,

“ Then close their eyes upon his flight,—
A secret path to go;—
Forbid them, as in darkest night,
His hidden steps to know.

“ And when Thine own good time shall come,
Conduct him to his own ;
And give back peace to every home,
Protected by the throne.

“ And oh ! for those who go to wield
The sword upon his side,
Do Thou protect them through the field,
And 'mid their battle ride.

“ Oh ! marshal them along their length ;
Oh ! order Thou the day ;
And strengthen Thou ! else vain their strength,
Vain ! vain their fond array !

“ But if the fight is not to speed,
And we be still to mourn,
Let me not see my children bleed,
Nor live to fill the urn !

“ Let me not see all from my breast
My husband torn away ;
But, taking them into Thy rest,
Oh, take my soul, I pray !”

She said, and comforts 'gan arise,
And in her breast to throng ;
So she closed the Book, with grateful sighs,
And passed her maids among.

Day followed still by day more sad,—
And night, a wearier tide,—
Three weeks their heavy passage had
Since the good Squire did ride.

Seldom within the silent vale
Was bruited news or fame ;
Sick with delay,—and wan,—and pale,—
All softly went the Dame.

Companion to her trembling steps
Her daughter Wynniard still
Approached to cheer her drooping heart,
And wait upon her will.

“ Constance,” she said, “ the time is long,
And often told the hour,
Since thy father rode his men among,
To join the royal power.

“ Oh, Victory’s wing hath speedy flight,
And soon the fame is spread ;
But now I’ve listened many a night,—
They have not,—have not sped !

“ I fear me all is overthrown,
And stricken our last stroke ;
And we, and what we call our own,
Have passed beneath the yoke ! ”

“ Alas ! dear mother, smooth thy brow,
Hope visits them that pray :
Our cause is just,—oh, cast not thou
Thy trust in God away !

“ Long—long the days since forth they sped !
Nightly I seem to miss
My father’s hand upon my head,
His blessing,—and his kiss.

“ Daily I lack my own good Knight,
I lack his converse dear ;
His bold free speech, upholding right,
His love for mine own ear.

“ Alack, I bear within my womb
My first—my cherished boy ;
God grant him a far distant tomb,—
A life of grace and joy !

“ But did I, dearest mother, think
All fatal was the fight,
I feel within my hope would sink,
Nor ever see the light.

“ But listen ! listen ! sure I hear
A horse in headlong race !
'Tis hushed !—but stay !—again my ear
Arrests the clattering pace.”

Anxious the Dame replied : “ How oft
That mocking thought doth wound !
Nothing doth stir,—the air is soft,—
'Tis silence all,—no sound.”

CONSTANCE.

“ But hearken ! hearken !”

DAME.

“ Nought I hear :
Perchance my sense grows dull.”

CONSTANCE.

“ Yes, mother, yes ! it hastens near ;
My trembling ear is full ! ”

DAME.

“ Dear Constance, may thy sanguine heart
Their faithful herald be ! ”

CONSTANCE.

“ Yes, mother, yes !—the clouds depart,—
I see them !—Oh, I see !

“ Deep in the moonbeam’s silver haze,
Oh see them as they ride ! ”

DAME.

“ Protect them, God, in all their ways,
And bring them to my side ! ”

CONSTANCE.

“ Now can I see their armour gleam :
Oh, proud they look, and tall ! ”

DAME.

“ But I miss the banner in the beam,—
I do not see them all.

“ Some—some are wanting ! Is their way
Made speedy in defeat ?
They come, they come, in disarray,
In numbers incomplete ! ”

Now hurrying, staggering, weary, spent,
The Cavaliers arrive ;
Their horses worn, their armour rent,
And pale as scarce alive.

Squire Matthew and Sir Wynniard came
Forth from the 'minished throng ;
Constance he kissed, while his faithful dame
Upon his bosom hung.

“ Dame ! Dame ! ” he said, “ beshrew the hour,—
Mishaps our steps await ;
Dashed are our hopes, and all our power
Hath met an evil fate.

“ We saw the King,—we joined his host,
True men they seemed, and strong ;
'Mongst them, 'twas said, his father's ghost
Did marshall them along ! ”

“ Poor Shade ! if for his foes’ defeat
He lingers ere he rest,
Weary will be his sainted feet,
And sadder still his breast.

“ Now must he hang about the path
Of those who seek his son ;
Baffle their sight, perplex their wrath,—
And make their work undone.

“ Far—far at Worcester,—loyal town,
The King his force displayed,—
Bold from the North all pouring down,—
Troop after troop arrayed.

“ And when I saw them as they stood,
Drawn out on Pitchcroft Mead,—
’Fore George ! it warmed my aged blood,
And made me glad indeed.

“ Then seemed it that our proud array
On Edge Hill ranged along,—
At Lansdown fight, or Roundaway,—
It seemed was not so strong.

“ But when the King rode down the line,
With lords and knights in place,
The while his countenance did shine
In courtesy and grace ;

“ When shouted every hearty lad,
And waved his cap in air,—
I thanked the Lord,—and my heart was glad,—
And proud that I was there.

“ But no !—thrice told our gallant power
The rebel numbers swell,—
Though, flattering fate, for many an hour
The battle promised well.

“ Not when 'neath Rupert's sword of flame,
Battalions sunk a prey,
When, like a tempest, on we came,—
And scourged whole hosts away ;

“ When, 'mid our sullen ranks, aloud
The charge so boldly brayed,—
And smit, as from a lightning cloud,
Their withered armies fled ;

“ Not bolder, swifter, not more fell,
Than sallied we to fight,—
Nor havoc greater!—Lo! we kill
Right through their centre! right!

“ But whether, all out-numbered we,
And past the power of man;
Or whether Lesley traitor be,—
Who stood aloof, and ran;

“ God knoweth alone. King, squire, and clown,
Merged in their endless hosts;
We saw full many a flag go down,—
We saw our battle lost.

“ Scattered our force, concealed, or slain,
The King is lost from sight;
Sleep half the lads of my poor train
In everlasting night.”

CONSTANCE.

“ But stay, dear father, in thy tale—
Another host I see;
They trace thy foot-tracks down the vale,
A goodly company.

“ They are the remnant of thy folk.”

SQUIRE.

“ Where are they, Constance, where ?
No remnant they,—but now the yoke,—
And bondage draweth near.

“ Foul hunters these, the weary deer
All vainly stands at bay ;
These be false Cromwell’s hounds, and here
Their quarry lies—a prey.

“ Son Wynniard, George, haste, we must fly,
The hiding-hole to win ;
Where Mass Priest Andrew wont to lie,
Who shrived my father’s sin.

“ Quick,—move the steeds,—your swords retain,
Bring provender in store ;
And so ensconce us—then, in train,
Receive them at the door.”

Each steed, aside his trapping laid,
Adown the vale they turn,
To graze in unsuspected shade
Along the Avon Bourne.

Then quick they seek the chamber high :

Within the hiding-place

Squire Matthew and his children lie,

To shun fierce Cromwell's face.

“ Now, mother, help ! ” young Constance spoke,

“ The entrance let us hide.”

And lo ! a bed all carved in oak

Vainly to move she tried.

They call the Nurse, they join their force,

It moves,—the stately screen ;

Creaking it takes its painful course,

The pannel rests unseen.

Hushed was the chamber,—listening,—still,

The Nurse and Constance stand ;

They hear the Dame pass down the stair,

To meet the rebel band.

DAME.

“ Oh ! who are ye who proudly thus

Invade me with your power ?

Who warrants ye ? ”—

REBELS.

“ Lord Cromwell’s sword—
Ope straightway, ope the door.”

DAME.

“ Alas ! why thus with pride invade
A widow’s early days ?
Depart from me ! I am in grief !
Leave—leave me ! Go your ways.”

REBELS.

“ Ope, ope thy door, false haughty dame,
Open thy door this day ;
Or look to see, in sword and flame,
My warrant force its way.

“ Thy spouse is here,—no widow thou,—
But widow soon to be,
He shall a word to Cromwell speak
Before he standeth free.”

Again they hear the smitten door
Upon its hinges jar ;
And then the Dame the order gave,
“ Withdraw the bolts, withdraw !

“ Oh, enter ye, and cease your strife,
And search,—a search in vain ;
Him finding not, take my poor life—
So shall we join again.

“ And tell coarse Cromwell he hath slain
A better man than he ;
And say that ye have courage ta'en,
And ris'n and slaughtered me.

“ And let him laugh his loud applause,
And render thanks and lands ;
Go in, and search, and finding not,
I'm ready for your hands.”

They hear the soldiers enter in
And occupy below,
The dame and maids with ceaseless din
Perplex them as they go.

They hear them search the house below,
Swift passing here and there,
And then the armed and heavy tread
They hear upon the stair.

Out spake the Nurse,—“ Enter the bed,
Doff, doff thine upper clothes,
Oh, like a wife, whose time is sped,
Act thou a mother’s throes.”

The Nurse uncombed the lady’s head,
Unclothed her, yea or no,
Drew her in haste unto the bed,
And forced her in to go.

“ Oh, lady, think ! behind they stand,
All but in Cromwell’s power,
Groan thou and sigh, I’ll wring the hand,—
Oh, act thy labour hour !”

The lady, sick with dread, and white,
In tears and anguish laid ;—
Poor actor she, yet well her fright
Supplied the part she played.

Now through the chambers can she hear
The heavy armèd tread ;
Nearer it comes, and as more near,
Paler she turned with dread.

At last a few short steps are passed,
And open flew the door ;
In stalked five armed men in haste,
And stood upon the floor.

“ Oh ! enter not,” the Nurse so wild,
“ My lady’s room,” she cried ;
“ My lady bears her bonny child—
It is her labour tide.”

“ Oh shame, oh shame !” out spake the Dame,—
“ If Puritans—be pure.”
Then Constance, with her eye in flame,
She signed them to the door.

“ Rash men, go hence ; I pay in pain
The penalty of sin ;—
My burden racks me sore ;—again,
Ye men, stay not within !

“ Treading the torturing path that trod
Your mothers as they bore—
Respect me !—I am under God !—
Pity ! my time is sore.

“ In mercy leave, while, as I may,
I writhe beneath the rod ;
Soften your hearts, leave me, and pray,—
I’m ’neath the hand of God !

“ Oh, add not to our heavy grief
My death, and Baby fair—”
She turned her eye to find relief,
And straightway fainted there.

The Nurse—upon the men she flew,
And thrust them to the door ;
The Dame in scornful carriage grew,—
They shrunk her face before.

“ Go hence, go hence !”—The searching men
A slighting survey made ;
They turned them to the door again,
And left the room afraid.

They left the room, and soon a cry
Said, “ Lady Wynniard dead !”
Hushed every voice, wept every eye—
The house they left afraid !

Oh, all too true the lady's prayers,—
Too true the hastened birth,—
Her fright, her striving, and her cares,
Relieved her from the earth !

The priest is come, and the child they've ta'en,
His forehead crossed and blest ;
Pure is the soul, they cannot retain,
For it sought the mother's breast.

It turned one look on the corpse so fair,
And it bowed the head so low ;
With a smile from Heaven, it rejoined her there,
And it never tasted woe !

Oh, ask not who that lady fair,
Who silent glides around,
The hall, the chamber, and the stair,
And moves without a sound !

And ask not whose that gentle child
Wrapt in her silken fold ;
Whom, mother still, with aspect mild,
She bosoms from the cold.

All nightly from the storied tomb,
While the sun goes round by the north,
On a saintly errand, athwart the gloom,
From the chancel she passes forth !

In haste to the chamber away she hath sped,
In haste to the panel hath gone,
She hath stood by the bed, and uplifted her head,
And whispered—" Thy will be done !"

She passes to bless each loyal bed,
And holy dreams to inspire,
That the sleeper may pray, when the morning is spread,
For the end of his travel is nigher.

Then she waits to count down the stars into the west,
And to view the moon retire ;
When she patient returns, with the babe on her breast,
For the end of their travel is nigher.

THE END.

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